PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY LIBRARY

Book No. 8734

Readers are requested to take great care of the books while they are in their possession, to protect them from rain, to point out any defects that they may observe in them to the Local Librarian and not to turn down the corners of leaves.

All books should be returned to the Centre from which they were borrowed on or before the date due for return; but an extension of the period of loan may be granted when possible.

Readers should report to the Local Librarian any case of infectious disease occurring in the house while a Library book is in their possession.

Readers desiring books which are not in the local collection can apply to the County Librarian, County Offices, Haverfordwest.

PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY LIBRARY

DATE DUE FOR RETURN

14. JAN. 1965
11. MAY 1965
6. OCT. 1971
21. JUN. 1974
19. JUL. 1974
-4. SEP. 1974
12. OCT. 1974
16. NOV. 1974
14. DEC. 1974
27. JAN. 1975
22. FEB. 1975
15. MAR. 1975
-5. APR. 1975

26. APR. 1975
17. MAY 1975
-7. JUN. 1975
28. JUN. 1975
-2. APR. 197
-7. MAY 1976
-4. JUN. 1976
-2. JUL. 1976
-6. AUG. 1976
10. SEP. 1976
-8. OCT. 1976
12. NOV. 1976
10/12/76

15. APR. 1978
28. FEB. 2005
25. JAN. 2006

WITHDRAWN FROM PLS
WITHDRAWN FROM PLS

BOHN'S STANDARD LIBRARY.

SCHILLER'S HISTORICAL DRAMAS.

"Schiller is the Æschylus of Germany, the loftiest of her tragic poets."—*Taylor (of Norwich).*

"Schiller was at once fiery and tender; impetuous, soft, affectionate; his enthusiasm clothed the universe with grandeur, and sent his spirit forth to explore its secrets, and mingle warmly in its interests. Thus poetry in Schiller was not one, but many gifts. It was not the 'lean and flashy song' of an ear apt for harmony, combined with a maudlin sensibility, or a mere animal ferocity of passion, and an imagination creative chiefly because unbridled; it was, what true poetry is always, the quintessence of general mental riches, the purified result of strong thought and conception, and of refined as well as powerful emotion. In his writings we behold him a moralist, a philosopher, a man of universal knowledge; in each of these capacities he is great, but also in more; for all that he achieves in these is brightened and gilded with the touch of another quality; his maxims, his feelings, his opinions, are transformed from the lifeless shape of didactic truths, into living shapes that address faculties far finer than the understanding."—*Carlyle.*

"With Schiller the imagination and the intellect were so nicely balanced, that one knows not which was the greater; owing, happily, to the extensive range of his studies, it may be said that as the intellect was enriched, the imagination was strengthened. He did not sing 'as the bird sings,' from the mere impulse of song, but he rather selected poetry as the most perfect form for the expression of noble fancies and high thoughts. 'His conscience was his muse.'"—*Sir E. L. Bulwer.*

"The better productions of the German stage have never been made known to us; for by some unfortunate chance the wretched pieces of Kotzebue have found a readier acceptance, or more willing translators, than the sublimity of Goethe, or the romantic strength of Schiller."—*Sir Walter Scott.*

"Schiller's poetical creations have had, beyond the province of art, an immediate effect upon life itself. The mighty charm of his song has not only touched the imaginations of men, but even their consciences; and the fiery zeal with which he entered into conflict with all that is base and vulgar, the holy enthusiasm with which he vindicated the acknowledged rights and the insulted dignity of man, more frequently and victoriously than any before him, make his name illustrious, not only among the poets, but among the noblest sages and heroes, who are dear to mankind."—*Menzel.*

Joan of A

F. W. Phillips

THE WORKS

OF

FREDERICK SCHILLER.

HISTORICAL DRAMAS,

ETC.

DON CARLOS.—MARY STUART.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS.—THE BRIDE OF MESSINA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

PEMBROKESHIRE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
RURAL LIBRARIES
WITHDRAWN FROM P.L.S.

LONDON:
HENRY G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1850.

LONDON:
GEORGE WOODFALL AND SON,
ANGEL COURT, SKINNER STREET.

PREFACE.

The present volume forms the third of the Standard Library edition of Schiller's works, and comprises four of his most admired dramas.

Don Carlos is translated by R. D. Boylan, Esq., and, in the opinion of competent judges, the version is eminently successful. Mr. Theodore Martin kindly assisted the publisher in conducting it through the press, and, it is but justice to state, has enhanced the value of the work by his judicious suggestions. This play, from its great length and difficulty, has been a source of considerable anxiety to the several parties concerned, but, it is hoped, not without a satisfactory result.

Mary Stuart is the translation of the late Joseph Mellish, Esq., who appears to have been on terms of intimate friendship with Schiller*; and mentions, in his preface, that he was commissioned to introduce this tragedy on the English Stage. His version was made from the prompter's copy, before the play was published, and, like Coleridge's Wallenstein, contains many passages not found in the printed edition. These curious and interesting morceaux are distinguished by brackets. On the other hand, Mr. Mellish omits many passages which now form part of the printed drama, all of which are added. The translation, as a whole, stands out from its compeers of the time (1800) in almost as marked a degree as Coleridge's Wallenstein, and some passages exhibit powers of a high order; a few, however, especially in the earlier scenes, seemed capable of improvement, and these have been revised, but, in deference to the translator, with a very sparing hand.

* Mr. Mellish was an Etonian, the schoolfellow, and, in after life, the friend and companion of Canning and Frere. With these distinguished scholars he assisted to plan and support that ingenious miscellany the *Microcosm*, published at Eton, in 1786 7, by Mr. Charles Knight, father of the present well known publisher. Mr. Mellish, in his maturer years, held the appointment of Consul-General at Hamburgh, and, during that period, acquired the friendship and esteem of many of the German literati, especially Goethe, who has dedicated a poem to him.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS is contributed by Miss Anna Swanwick. Specimens of her translation have already appeared in a volume entitled "Selections from the Dramas of Goethe and Schiller," which obtained the favourable notice of several reviewers. It has been carefully revised for this edition, and is now, for the first time, published complete.

THE BRIDE OF MESSINA, which has been regarded as the poetical masterpiece of Schiller, and perhaps of all his works presents the greatest difficulties to the translator, is rendered by A. Lodge, Esq., M.A. This version on it first publication, a few years ago, was received with deserved eulogy by several distinguished critics, more especially in the *Examiner* and *Athenæum*, where it formed the subject of elaborate notices. To the present edition has been added Schiller's Essay on the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy, in which the author's favourite theory of the "Ideal of Art" is enforced with great ingenuity and eloquence. This piece has not before appeared in an English dress.

Neither labour nor expense has been spared in the production of the present volume, and scarcely any sale of it, in this popular form, can reimburse the publisher; but, if he should succeed in diffusing among his countrymen a more enlarged appreciation of the beauties of Schiller, he will feel abundantly requited.

The next volume (the fourth) will contain THE ROBBERS, and the remainder of Schiller's dramatic pieces, with some miscellanies.

The fifth volume will comprise the Poems, translated by various hands. Many manuscript translations have already been placed at the disposal of the publisher in an unsolicited and obliging manner; and he takes this occasion to say that he will feel grateful for any addition to his store, reserving to himself, however, the right to select those which he may judge to be the most successful. The names of the translators, excepting in a few instances where they are anonymous, will be affixed.

H. G. B.

MAY, 1847.

DON CARLOS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PHILIP THE SECOND, *King of Spain.*
DON CARLOS, *Prince, Son of Philip.*
ALEXANDER FARNESE, *Prince of Parma.*
MARQUIS DE POSA.
DUKE OF ALVA.
COUNT LERMA, *Colonel of the Body Guard.*
DUKE OF FERIA, *Knight of the Golden Fleece.*
DUKE OF MEDINA SIDONIA, *Admiral.*
DON RAIMOND DE TAXIS, *Postmaster General.*
} *Grandees of Spain.*
DOMINGO, *Confessor to the King.*
GRAND INQUISITOR *of Spain.*
PRIOR *of a Carthusian Convent.*
PAGE *of the Queen.*
DON LOUIS MERCADO, *Physician to the Queen.*
ELIZABETH DE VALOIS, *Queen of Spain.*
INFANTA CLARA FARNESE, *a Child three years of age.*
DUCHESS D'OLIVAREZ, *principal Attendant on the Queen.*
MARCHIONESS DE MONDECAR.
PRINCESS EBOLI.
COUNTESS FUENTES.
} *Ladies attendant on the Queen.*
Several Ladies, Nobles, Pages, Officers of the Body Guard, and mute Characters.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Royal Gardens in Aranjuez.

CARLOS *and* DOMINGO.

DOMINGO.

Our pleasant sojourn in Aranjuez
Is over now, and yet your Highness quits
These joyous scenes no happier than before.
Our visit hath been fruitless. O, my Prince,
Break this mysterious and gloomy silence!
Open your heart to your own father's heart!
A monarch never can too dearly buy
The peace of his own son—his only son
[CARLOS *looks on the ground in silence*
Is there one dearest wish, that bounteous Heaven
Hath e'er withheld from her most favour'd child?
I stood beside, when in Toledo's walls
The lofty Charles received his vassals' homage,
When conquer'd princes throng'd to kiss his hand,
And there at once six mighty kingdoms fell

In fealty at his feet:—I stood and mark'd
The young proud blood mount to his glowing cheek,
I saw his bosom swell with high resolves,
His eye, all radiant with triumphant pride,
Flash through the assembled throng; and that same eye
Confess'd, "Now am I wholly satisfied!"

[CARLOS *turns away.*

This silent sorrow, which for eight long moons
Hath hung its shadows, Prince, upon your brow,—
The myst'ry of the court, the nation's grief,—
Hath cost your father many a sleepless night,
And many a tear of anguish to your mother

CARLOS (*turning hastily round*).

My mother!—Grant, O Heaven, I may forget
How she became my mother!

DOMINGO.

Gracious Prince!

CARLOS (*passing his hand thoughtfully over his brow*).

Alas! alas! a fruitful source of woe
Have mothers been to me. My youngest act,
When first these eyes beheld the light of day,
Destroyed a mother.

DOMINGO.

Is it possible,
That this reproach disturbs your conscience, Prince?

CARLOS.

And my new mother! Hath she not already
Cost me my father's heart? Scarce lov'd at best,
My claim to some small favour lay in this—
I was his only child! 'Tis over! She
Hath blest him with a daughter—and who knows
What slumbering ills the future hath in store?

DOMINGO.

You jest, my Prince. All Spain adores its Queen.
Shall it be thought that you, of all the world,
Alone should view her with the eyes of hate,—
Gaze on her charms, and yet be coldly wise?
How, Prince? The loveliest lady of her time,
A Queen withal, and once your own betrothed?
No, no, impossible—it cannot be!
Where all men love, you surely cannot hate.

Carlos could never so belie himself.
I prithee, Prince, take heed she do not learn,
That she hath lost her son's regard. The news
Would pain her deeply.

CARLOS.

Ay, sir! think you so?

DOMINGO.

Your Highness doubtless will remember how,
At the late tournament in Saragossa,
A lance's splinter struck our gracious Sire.
The Queen, attended by her ladies, sat
High in the centre gallery of the palace,
And looked upon the fight. A cry arose,
"The King! he bleeds!" Soon through the general din,
A rising murmur strikes upon her ear.
"The Prince—The Prince!" she cries, and forward rushed,
As though to leap down from the balcony,
When a voice answer'd, "No, the King himself!"
"Then send for his physicians!" she replied,
And straight regain'd her former self-composure.
[*After a short pause*
But you seem wrapp'd in thought?

CARLOS.

In wonder, sir,
That the King's merry confessor should own
So rare a skill in the romancer's art. [*Austerely.*
Yet have I ever heard it said, that those
Who watch men's looks, and carry tales about,
Have done more mischief in this world of ours,
Than the assassin's knife, or poison'd bowl.
Your labour, sir, hath been but ill-bestow'd;
Would you win thanks, go seek them of the King.

DOMINGO.

This caution, Prince, is wise. Be circumspect
With men—but not with every man alike.
Repel not friends and hypocrites together;
I mean you well, believe me!

CARLOS.

Say you so?
Let not my father mark it, then, or else
Farewell your hopes for ever of the purple

DOMINGO (*starts*).

How!

CARLOS.

Even so! Hath he not promised you
The earliest purple in the gift of Spain?

DOMINGO.

You mock me, Prince!

CARLOS.

Nay! Heaven forefend, that I
Should mock that awful man, whose fateful lips
Can doom my father or to heaven or hell!

DOMINGO.

I dare not, Prince, presume to penetrate
The sacred mystery of your secret grief,
Yet I implore your Highness to remember,
That, for a conscience ill at ease, the Church
Hath opened an asylum, of which kings
Hold not the key—where even crimes are purged
Beneath the holy Sacramental seal.
You know my meaning, Prince—I've said enough.

CARLOS.

No! be it never said, I tempted so
The keeper of that seal.

DOMINGO.

Prince, this mistrust—
You wrong the most devoted of your servants.

CARLOS.

Then give me up at once without a thought!
Thou art a holy man,—the world knows that,—
But, to speak plain, too zealous far for me.
The road to Peter's chair is long and rough,
And too much knowledge might encumber you.
Go, tell this to the King, who sent thee hither!

DOMINGO.

Who sent me hither?

CARLOS.

Ay! Those were my words.
Too well—too well, I know, that I'm betray'd,
Slander'd on every hand—that at this court
A hundred eyes are hired to watch my steps.

I know, that royal Philip to his slaves
Hath sold his only son, and ev'ry wretch,
Who takes account of each half-utter'd word,
Receives such princely guerdon, as was ne'er
Bestowed on deeds of honour. O, I know——
But hush!—no more of that! My heart will else
O'erflow, and I've already said too much.

DOMINGO.

The King is minded, ere the set of sun,
To reach Madrid: I see the Court is mustering.
Have I permission, Prince?

CARLOS.

I'll follow straight.

[*Exit* DOMINGO.

CARLOS (*after a short silence*).

O, wretched Philip! wretched as thy son!
Soon shall thy bosom bleed at ev'ry pore,
Torn by suspicion's poisonous serpent fang.
Thy fell sagacity full soon shall pierce
The fatal secret it is bent to know,
And thou wilt madden, when it breaks upon thee!

SCENE II.

CARLOS, MARQUIS OF POSA.

CARLOS.

Lo! Who comes here? 'Tis he! O, ye kind heavens,
My Roderigo!

MARQUIS

Carlos!

CARLOS.

Can it be?
And is it truly thou? O yes, it is!
I press thee to my bosom, and I feel
Thy throbbing heart beat wildly 'gainst mine own.
And now all's well again. In this embrace
My sick, sad heart is comforted. I hang
Upon my Roderigo's neck!

MARQUIS.

Thy heart!
Thy sick, sad heart! And what is well again—
What needeth to be well? Thy words amaze me.

CARLOS.

What brings thee back so suddenly from Brussels?
Whom must I thank for this most glad surprise?
And dare I ask? Whom should I thank but thee,
Thou gracious and all bounteous Providence?
Forgive me, Heaven! if joy hath crazed my brain.
Thou knew'st, no angel watch'd at Carlos' side,
And sent me this! And yet I ask who sent him?

MARQUIS.

Pardon, dear Prince, if I can only meet
With wonder these tumultuous ecstacies.
Not thus I look'd to find Don Philip's son.
A hectic red burns on your pallid cheek,
And your lips quiver with a feverish heat.
What must I think, dear Prince? No more I see
The youth of lion heart, to whom I come
The envoy of a brave and suffering people.
For now I stand not here as Roderigo,—
Not as the playmate of the stripling Carlos,—
But, as the deputy of all mankind,
I clasp thee thus:—'tis Flanders that clings here
Around thy neck, appealing with my tears
To thee for succour in her bitter need.
This land is lost, this land so dear to thee,
If Alva, bigotry's relentless tool,
Advance on Brussels with his Spanish laws.
This noble country's last faint hope depends
On thee, lov'd scion of Imperial Charles!
And, should thy noble heart forget to beat,
In human nature's cause, Flanders is lost!

CARLOS.

Then it is lost!

MARQUIS.

What do I hear? Alas!

CARLOS.

Thou speak'st of times, that long have pass'd away.
I, too, have had my visions of a Carlos,
Whose cheek would fire at freedom's glorious name.
But he, alas! has long been in his grave.

He, thou seest here, no longer is that Carlos,
Who took his leave of thee in Alcala,
Who, in the fervour of a youthful heart,
Resolv'd, at some no distant time, to wake
The golden age in Spain! O the conceit,
Though but a child's, was yet divinely fair!
Those dreams are past!

MARQUIS

Said you, those dreams, my Prince!
And were they only dreams?

CARLOS.

O let me weep,
Upon thy bosom weep these burning tears,
My only friend! Not one have I—not one—
In the wide circuit of this earth,—not one
Far as the sceptre of my sire extends,
Far as his navies bear the flag of Spain,
There is no spot—none—none, where I dare yield
An outlet to my tears, save only this
I charge thee, Roderigo! O, by all
The hopes we both do entertain of heaven,
Cast me not off from thee, my friend, my friend!

[POSA *bends over him in silent emotion.*

Look on me, Posa, as an orphan child,
Found near the throne, and nurtured by thy love.
Indeed, I know not what a father is.
I am a monarch's son.—O, were it so,
As my heart tells me that it surely is,
That thou from millions hast been chosen out
To comprehend my being; if it be true,
That all-creating nature has designed
In me to reproduce a Roderigo,
And on the morning of our life attuned
Our souls' soft concords to the selfsame key;
If one poor tear, which gives my heart relief,
To thee were dearer than my father's favour—

MARQUIS.

O, it is dearer far than all the world!

CARLOS.

I'm fallen so low, have grown so poor withal,
I must recall to thee our childhood's years,—

Must ask thee payment of a debt incurr'd
When thou and I were scarce to boyhood grown.
Dost thou remember, how we grew together,
Two daring youths, like brothers, side by side?
I had no sorrow but to see myself
Eclipsed by thy bright genius. So I vow'd,
Since I might never cope with thee in power,
That I would love thee with excess of love.
Then with a thousand shows of tenderness,
And warm affection, I besieged thy heart,
Which cold and proudly still repulsed them all.
Oft have I stood, and—yet thou saw'st it never—
Hot bitter tear-drops brimming in mine eyes.
When I have mark'd thee, passing me unheeded,
Fold to thy bosom youths of humbler birth.
"Why only these?" in anguish once I asked—
"Am I not kind and good to thee as they?"
But dropping on thy knees, thine answer came,
With an unloving look of cold reserve,
"This is my duty to the monarch's son!"

MARQUIS.

O spare me, dearest Prince, nor now recall
Those boyish acts that make me blush for shame.

CARLOS.

I did not merit such disdain from thee—
You might despise me, crush my heart, but never
Alter my love. Three times didst thou repulse
The Prince, and thrice he came to thee again,
To beg thy love, and force on thee his own.
At length chance wrought what Carlos never could.
Once we were playing, when thy shuttlecock
Glanced off and struck my aunt, Bohemia's Queen,
Full in the face! She thought 'twas with intent,
And all in tears complain'd unto the King.
The palace youth were summoned on the spot,
And charged to name the culprit.—High in wrath,
The King vow'd vengeance for the deed: "Although
It were his son, yet still should he be made
A dread example!" I look'd around, and mark'd

Thee stand aloof, all trembling with dismay.
Straight I stepp'd forth; before the royal feet
I flung myself, and cried—"'Twas I who did it,
Now let thine anger fall upon thy son!"

MARQUIS.

Ah! wherefore, Prince, remind me?

CARLOS.

Hear me farther!

Before the face of the assembled Court,
That stood, all pale with pity, round about,
Thy Carlos was tied up, whipt like a slave—
I look'd on thee and wept not. Blow rain'd on blow;
I gnash'd my teeth with pain, yet wept I not!
My royal blood stream'd 'neath the pitiless lash;
I look'd on thee, and wept not. Then you came,
And fell half choked with sobs before my feet:
"Carlos," you cried, "my pride is overcome;
I will repay thee when thou art a king."

MARQUIS (*stretching forth his hand to* CARLOS).

Carlos, I'll keep my word: my boyhood's vow
I now as man renew. I will repay thee.
Some day, perchance, the hour may come——

CARLOS.

Now! now!

The hour has come; thou canst repay me all.
I have sore need of love. A fearful secret
Burns in my breast; it must—it must be told.
In thy pale looks my death-doom will I read.
Listen—be petrified—but answer not.
I love—I love——my mother!

MARQUIS.

O my God

CARLOS.

Nay, no forbearance! Spare me not! Speak! speak—
Proclaim aloud, that on this earth's great round
There is no misery to compare with mine.
Speak, speak!—I know all—all that thou canst say!
The son doth love his mother. All the world's
Established usages,—the course of nature,—

Rome's fearful laws, denounce my fatal passion.
My suit conflicts with my own father's rights:
I feel it all, and yet I love. This path
Leads on to madness, or the scaffold. I
Love without hope—love guiltily—love madly,
With anguish, and with peril of my life;
I see, I see it all, and yet I love.

MARQUIS.

The Queen,—does she know of your passion?

CARLOS.

Could I
Reveal it to her? She is Philip's wife,—
She is the Queen, and this is Spanish ground,
Watch'd by a jealous father, hemm'd around
By ceremonial forms, how, how could I
Approach her unobserved? 'Tis now eight months,
Eight maddening months, since the King summoned me
Home from my studies,—since I have been doom'd
To look on her,—adore her, day by day,
And all the while be silent as the grave!
Eight maddening months, Roderigo,—think of this!—
This fire has seethed and raged within my breast!
A thousand, thousand times, the dread confession
Has mounted to my lips,—yet evermore
Shrunk, like a craven, back upon my heart.
O Roderigo!—for a few brief moments
Alone with her!

MARQUIS.

Ah! and your father, Prince!

CARLOS.

Unhappy me! Remind me not of him.
Tell me of all the torturing pangs of conscience,
But speak not, I implore you, of my father!

MARQUIS.

Then do you hate your father?

CARLOS.

No, oh no!

I do not hate my father; but the fear
That guilty creatures feel,—a shuddering dread,—
Comes o'er me ever at that terrible name
Am I to blame, if slavish nurture crush'd
Love's tender germ within my youthful heart?
Six years I'd numbered, ere the fearful man,
They told me was my father, met mine eyes.
One morning 'twas, when with a stroke I saw him
Sign four death warrants After that I ne'er
Beheld him, save when, for some childish fault,
I was brought out for chastisement. O God!
I feel my heart grow bitter at the thought.
Let us away! away!

MARQUIS.

Nay, Carlos, nay,
You must, you shall give all your sorrow vent
Let it have words! 'twill ease your o'erfraught heart.

CARLOS.

Oft have I struggled with myself, and oft
At midnight, when my guards were sunk in sleep,
With floods of burning tears I've sunk before
The image of the ever-blessed Virgin,
And craved a filial heart, but all in vain.
I rose with prayer unheard. O Roderigo!
Unfold this wondrous mystery of Heaven,
Why of a thousand fathers only this
Should fall to me—and why to him this son,
Of many thousand better? Nature could not
In her wide orb have found two opposites
More diverse in their elements How could
She bind the two extremes of human kind—
Myself and him—in one so holy bond?
O dreadful fate! Why was it so decreed?
Why should two men, in all things else apart,
Concur so fearfully in one desire?
Roderigo, here thou seest two hostile stars,
That in the lapse of ages, only once,
As they sweep onwards in their orbed course,
Touch with a crash that shakes them to the centre,
Then rush apart for ever and for ever.

MARQUIS.

I feel a dire foreboding.

CARLOS.

So do I.

Like hell's grim furies, dreams of dreadful shape
Pursue me still. My better genius strives
With the fell projects of a dark despair.
My wildered subtle spirit crawls through maze
On maze of sophistries, until at length
It gains a yawning precipice's brink.
O, Roderigo! should I e'er in him
Forget the father—ah! thy deathlike look
Tells me I'm understood—should I forget
The father—what were then the King to me?

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

One thing, my Carlos, let me beg of you!
Whate'er may be your plans, do nothing,—nothing,—
Without your friend's advice. You promise this?

CARLOS.

All, all I promise that thy love can ask!
I throw myself entirely upon thee!

MARQUIS.

The King, I hear, is going to Madrid.
The time is short. If with the Queen you would
Converse in private, it is only here,
Here in Aranjuez, it can be done.
The quiet of the place, the freer manners,
All favour you.

CARLOS.

And such, too, was my hope;
But it, alas. was vain.

MARQUIS.

Not wholly so.
I go to wait upon her. If she be
The same in Spain she was in Henry's Court,
She will be frank at least. And if I can
Read any hope for Carlos in her looks—
Find her inclined to grant an interview—
Get her attendant ladies sent away—

CARLOS.

Most of them are my friends—especially
The Countess Mondecar, whom I have gain'd
By service to her son, my page.

MARQUIS.

'Tis well;
Be you at hand, and ready to appear,
Whene'er I give the signal, Prince.

CARLOS.

I will,—
Be sure, I will:—and all good speed attend thee!

MARQUIS.

I will not lose a moment; so, farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*

Scene III.

The Queen's Residence in Aranjuez.—The Pleasure Grounds, intersected by an Avenue, terminated by the Queen's Palace.

The Queen, Duchess of Olivarez, Princess of Eboli, *and* Marchioness of Mondecar, *all advancing from the avenue.*

QUEEN (*to the Marchioness*).

I will have you beside me, Mondecar.
The Princess, with these merry eyes of hers,
Has plagued me all the morning. See, she scarce
Can hide the joy she feels to leave the country.

EBOLI.

'Twere idle to conceal, my Queen, that I
Shall be most glad to see Madrid once more.

MONDECAR.

And will your Majesty not be so, too?
Are you so griev'd to quit Aranjuez?

QUEEN.

To quit—this lovely spot at least, I am.
This is my world. Its sweetness oft and oft
Has twined itself around my inmost heart.
Here, nature, simple, rustic nature greets me,
The sweet companion of my early years—
Here I indulge once more my childhood's sports,

And my dear France's gales come blowing here.
Blame not this partial fondness—all hearts yearn
For their own native land.

EBOLI.

But then how lone,
How dull and lifeless is it here! We might
As well be in La Trappe.

QUEEN.

I cannot see it.
To me Madrid alone is lifeless. But
What saith our Duchess to it?

OLIVAREZ.

Why, methinks,
Your Majesty, since kings have ruled in Spain,
It hath been still the custom for the Court
To pass the summer months alternately
Here and at Pardo,—in Madrid, the winter.

QUEEN.

Well, I suppose it has! Duchess, you know
I've long resign'd all argument with you.

MONDECAR.

Next month, Madrid will be all life and bustle.
They're fitting up the Plaza Mayor now,
And we shall have rare bull-fights; and, besides,
A grand Auto da Fé is promised us.

QUEEN.

Promised? This from my gentle Mondecar!

MONDECAR.

Why not? 'Tis only heretics they burn!

QUEEN.

I hope my Eboli thinks otherwise!

EBOLI.

What, I? I beg your Majesty may think me
As good a Christian as the Marchioness.

QUEEN.

Alas! I had forgotten where I am,—
No more of this! We were speaking, I think,
About the country? And methinks this month

Has flown away with strange rapidity.
I counted on much pleasure, very much,
From our retirement here, and yet I have not
Found that which I expected. Is it thus
With all our hopes? And yet I cannot say
One wish of mine is left ungratified.

OLIVAREZ.

You have not told us, Princess Eboli,
If there be hope for Gomez,—and if we may
Expect ere long to greet you as his bride?

QUEEN.

True—thank you, Duchess, for reminding me!
[*Addressing the* PRINCESS.
I have been ask'd to urge his suit with you.
But can I do it? The man, whom I reward
With my sweet Eboli, must be a man
Of noble stamp indeed.

OLIVAREZ.

And such he is,
A man of mark and fairest fame,—a man
Whom our dear monarch signally has graced
With his most royal favour.

QUEEN.

He's happy in
Such high good fortune; but we fain would know,
If he can love, and win return of love.
This Eboli must answer.

EBOLI (*stands speechless and confused, her eyes bent on the ground; at last she falls at the* QUEEN's *feet*).

Gracious Queen!
Have pity on me! Let me—let me not,—
For Heaven's sake, let me not be sacrificed.

QUEEN

Be sacrificed! I need no more. Arise!
'Tis a hard fortune to be sacrificed.
I do believe you. Rise. And is it long
Since you rejected Gomez' suit?

EBOLI.

Some months—
Before Prince Carlos came from Alcala.

QUEEN (*starts and looks at her with an inquisitive glance*).
Have you tried well the grounds of your refusal?

EBOLI (*with energy*).
It cannot be, my Queen, no, never, never,—
For a thousand reasons, never!

QUEEN.
One's enough.
You do not love him. That suffices me.
Now let it pass. [*To her other ladies.*
I have not seen the Infanta
Yet this morning. Pray bring her, Marchioness.

OLIVAREZ (*looking at the clock*).
It is not yet the hour, your Majesty.

QUEEN.
Not yet the hour for me to be a mother!
That's somewhat hard. Forget not, then, to tell me
When the right hour does come.

[*A Page enters and whispers to the first lady, who thereupon turns to the* QUEEN.

OLIVAREZ.
The Marquis Posa,
May 't please your Majesty.

QUEEN.
The Marquis Posa!

OLIVAREZ.
He comes from France, and from the Netherlands,
And craves the honour to present some letters
Entrusted to him by your royal Mother.

QUEEN.
Is this allow'd?

OLIVAREZ (*hesitating*).
A case so unforeseen
Is not provided for in my instructions.
When a Castilian grandee, with despatches
From foreign Courts, shall in her garden find
The Queen of Spain, and tender them—

QUEEN.
Enough!
I'll venture, then, on mine own proper peril.

OLIVAREZ.

May I, your Majesty, withdraw the while?

QUEEN.

E'en as you please, good Duchess!

[*Exit the* DUCHESS, *the* QUEEN *gives the Page a sign, who thereupon retires.*

SCENE IV.

The QUEEN, PRINCESS EBOLI, MARCHIONESS OF MONDECAR, *and* MARQUIS OF POSA.

QUEEN.

I bid you welcome, sir, to Spanish ground!

MARQUIS.

Ground, which I never with so just a pride
Hail'd for the country of my sires, as now.

QUEEN (*to the two ladies*).

The Marquis Posa, ladies, who at Rheims
Coped with my father in the lists, and made
My colours thrice victorious; the first,
That made me feel how proud a thing it was
To be the Queen of Spain and Spanish men.

[*Turning to the* MARQUIS.

When we last parted in the Louvre, sir,
You scarcely dreamed that I should ever be
Your hostess in Castile.

MARQUIS

Most true, my liege!
For at that time I never could have dream'd
That France should lose to us the only thing
We envied her possessing.

QUEEN.

How, proud Spaniard!
The only thing! And you can venture this—
This, to a daughter of the House of Valois!

MARQUIS.

I venture now to say it, gracious Queen,
Since now you are our own.

QUEEN.

Your journey hither
Has led you, as I hear, thro' France What news

Have you brought with you from my honour'd mother,
And from my dearest brothers?

MARQUIS (*handing letters*).

I left your Royal Mother sick at heart,
Bereft of every joy, save only this,
To know her daughter happy on the throne
Of our imperial Spain.

QUEEN.

Could she be aught
But happy, in the dear remembrances
Of relatives so kind—in the sweet thoughts
Of the old time, when——Sir, you've visited
Full many a court in these your various travels,
And seen strange lands and customs manifold;
And now, they say, you mean to keep at home,
A greater prince, in your retired domain,
Than is King Philip on his throne—a freer.
You're a philosopher: but much I doubt
If our Madrid will please you. We are so—
So quiet in Madrid.

MARQUIS.

And that is more
Than all the rest of Europe has to boast.

QUEEN.

I've heard as much. But all this world's concerns
Are well nigh blotted from my memory.

[*To* PRINCESS EBOLI.

Princess, methinks I see a hyacinth
Yonder, in bloom. Wilt bring it to me, sweet?

[*The* PRINCESS *goes towards the place, the* QUEEN *softly to the* MARQUIS.

I'm much mistaken, sir, or your arrival
Has made one heart more happy here at court.

MARQUIS.

I have found a sad one—one that in this world
A ray of sunshine——

EBOLI.

As this gentleman
Has seen so many countries, he, no doubt,
Has much of note to tell us.

MARQUIS.

Doubtless, and
To seek adventures, is a knight's first duty—
But his most sacred is to shield the fair.

MONDECAR.

From giants! But there are no giants now!

MARQUIS.

Power is a giant ever to the weak.

QUEEN.

The chevalier says well. There still are giants;
But there are knights no more.

MARQUIS.

Not long ago,
On my return from Naples, I became
The witness of a very touching story,
Which ties of friendship almost make my own.
Were I not fearful its recital might
Fatigue your Majesty——

QUEEN.

Have I a choice?
The Princess is not to be lightly balked.
Proceed. I too, sir, love a story dearly.

MARQUIS.

Two noble houses in Mirandola,
Wearied of jealousies and deadly feuds,
Transmitted down from Guelphs and Ghibellines,
Through centuries of hate, from sire to son,
Resolved to ratify a lasting peace
By the sweet ministry of nuptial ties.
Fernando, nephew of the great Pietro,
And fair Matilda, old Colonna's child,
Were chosen to cement this holy bond.
Nature had never for each other form'd
Two fairer hearts. And never had the world
Approved a wiser or a happier choice.
Still had the youth adored his lovely bride
In the dull limner's portraiture alone.
How thrill'd his heart, then, in the hope to find
The truth of all that e'en his fondest dreams
Had scarcely dared to credit in her picture!

In Padua, where his studies held him bound,
Fernando panted for the joyful hour,
When he might murmur at Matilda's feet
The first pure homage of his fervent love.

[*The* QUEEN *grows more attentive; the* MARQUIS *continues, after a short pause, addressing himself chiefly to* PRINCESS EBOLI.

Meanwhile the sudden death of Pietro's wife,
Had left him free to wed. With the hot glow
Of youthful blood the hoary lover drinks
The fame that reach'd him of Matilda's charms.
He comes—he sees—he loves! The new desire
Stifles the voice of nature in his heart.
The uncle woos his nephew's destined bride,
And at the altar consecrates his theft.

QUEEN.

And what did then Fernando?

MARQUIS.

On the wings
Of love, unconscious of the fearful change,
Delirious with the promis'd joy, he speeds
Back to Mirandola. His flying steed
By star-light gains the gate. Tumultuous sounds
Of music, dance, and jocund revelry
Ring from the walls of the illumin'd palace.
With faltering steps he mounts the stair; and now
Behold him in the crowded nuptial hall,
Unrecognised! Amid the reeling guests
Pietro sat. An angel at his side—
An angel, whom he knows, and who to him,
Even in his dreams, seem'd ne'er so beautiful.
A single glance reveal'd what once was his,—
Reveal'd what now was lost to him for ever.

EBOLI.

O poor Fernando!

QUEEN.

Surely, sir, your tale
Is ended? Nay, it must be.

MARQUIS.

No, not quite.

QUEEN.

Did you not say, Fernando was your friend?

MARQUIS.

I have no dearer in the world.

EBOLI.

But pray
Proceed, sir, with your story.

MARQUIS.

Nay, the rest
Is very sad—and to recall it sets
My sorrow fresh abroach. Spare me the sequel.

[*A general silence*

QUEEN (*turning to the* PRINCESS EBOLI).

Surely the time is come to see my daughter,
I prithee, princess, bring her to me now!

[*The* PRINCESS *withdraws. The* MARQUIS *beckons a Page. The* QUEEN *opens the letters, and appears surprised. The* MARQUIS *talks with* MARCHIONESS MONDECAR. *The* QUEEN *having read the letters, turns to the* MARQUIS *with a penetrating look.*

QUEEN.

You have not spoken of Matilda!—She
Haply was ignorant of Fernando's grief?

MARQUIS.

Matilda's heart has no one fathom'd yet—
Great souls endure in silence.

QUEEN.

You look around you. Who is it you seek?

MARQUIS.

Just then the thought came over me, how one,
Whose name I dare not mention, would rejoice,
Stood he where I do now.

QUEEN.

And who's to blame,
That he does not?

MARQUIS (*interrupting her eagerly*).

My liege! And dare I venture
To interpret thee, as fain I would? He'd find
Forgiveness, then, if now he should appear.

QUEEN (*alarmed*).

Now, Marquis, now? What do you mean by this?

MARQUIS.

Might he, then, hope?

QUEEN.

You terrify me, Marquis.

Surely he will not——

MARQUIS.

He is here already.

SCENE V.

The QUEEN, CARLOS, MARQUIS POSA, MARCHIONESS MONDECAR.
The two latter go towards the Avenue.

CARLOS (*on his knees before the* QUEEN).

At length 'tis come—the happy moment's come,
And Charles may touch this all-beloved hand.

QUEEN.

What headlong folly's this? And dare you break
Into my presence thus? Arise, rash man!
We are observed; my suite are close at hand.

CARLOS.

I will not rise. Here will I kneel for ever,
Here will I lie enchanted at your feet,
And grow to the dear ground you tread on?

QUEEN.

Madman!
To what rude boldness my indulgence leads!
Know you, it is the Queen, your mother, sir,
Whom you address in such presumptuous strain?
Know, that myself will to the King, report
This bold intrusion——

CARLOS.

And that I must die!
Let them come here, and drag me to the scaffold!
A moment spent in paradise, like this,
Is not too dearly purchased by a life.

QUEEN.

But then your Queen?—

CARLOS (*rising*).

O God, I'll go, I'll go!
Can I refuse to bend to that appeal?

I am your very plaything. Mother, mother,
A sign, a transient glance, one broken word
From those dear lips can bid me live or die.
What would you more? Is there beneath the sun
One thing I would not haste to sacrifice,
To meet your lightest wish?

QUEEN.

Then fly!

CARLOS.

O God!

QUEEN.

With tears I do conjure you, Carlos, fly!
I ask no more. O fly! before my court,
My guards, detecting us alone together,
Bear the dread tidings to your father's ear.

CARLOS.

I bide my doom, or be it life or death.
Have I staked every hope on this one moment,
Which gives thee to me, thus at length alone,
That idle fears should balk me of my purpose?
No, Queen! The world may round its axis roll
A hundred thousand times, ere chance again
Yield to my prayers a moment such as this.

QUEEN.

It never shall to all eternity.
Unhappy man! What would you ask of me?

CARLOS.

Heaven is my witness, Queen, how I have struggled,
Struggled as mortal never did before.
But all in vain! My manhood fails—I yield.

QUEEN.

No more of this—for *my* sake—for my peace—

CARLOS.

You were mine own,—in face of all the world,—
Affianced to me by two mighty crowns,
By Heaven and nature plighted as my bride,
But Philip, cruel Philip, stole you from me.

QUEEN.

He is your father!

CARLOS.

And he is your husband!

QUEEN.

And gives to you, for an inheritance,
The mightiest monarchy in all the world!

CARLOS.

And you, as mother!

QUEEN.

Mighty Heavens! You rave!

CARLOS.

And is he even conscious of his treasure?
Hath he a heart to feel and value yours?
I'll not complain—no, no, I will forget,
How happy, past all utterance, I might
Have been with you,—if he were only so.
But he is not—there, there the anguish lies!
He is not, and he never—never can be.
O, you have robb'd me of my paradise,
Only to blast it in King Philip's arms!

QUEEN.

Horrible thought!

CARLOS.

O yes, right well I know
Who 'twas that knit this ill-starr'd marriage up
I know how Philip loves, and how he wooed.
What are you in this kingdom—tell me, what?
Regent, belike! Oh, no! If such you were,
How could fell Alvas act their murderous deeds,
Or Flanders bleed a martyr for her faith?
Are you e'en Philip's wife? Impossible—
Beyond belief. A wife doth still possess
Her husband's heart. To whom doth his belong?
If e'er, perchance, in some hot feverish mood,
He yields to gentler impulse, begs he not
Forgiveness of his sceptre and grey hairs?

QUEEN.

Who told you that my lot, at Philip's side,
Was one for men to pity?

CARLOS.

My own heart!
Which feels, with burning pangs, how at my side
It had been to be envied.

QUEEN.

Thou vain man!
What if my heart should tell me the reverse?
How, sir, if Philip's watchful tenderness,
The looks that silently proclaim his love,
Touch'd me more deeply, than his haughty son's
Presumptuous eloquence? What, if an old man's
Matured esteem——

CARLOS.

That makes a difference! Then,
Why then, forgiveness!—I'd no thought of this;
I had no thought that you could love the King.

QUEEN.

To honour him's my pleasure and my wish.

CARLOS.

Then you have never loved?

QUEEN.

Singular question!

CARLOS.

Then you have never loved?

QUEEN.

I love no longer!

CARLOS.

Because your heart forbids it, or your oath?

QUEEN.

Leave me; nor ever touch this theme again.

CARLOS.

Because your oath forbids it, or your heart?

QUEEN.

Because my duty—but, alas, alas!
To what avails this scrutiny of fate,
Which we must both obey?

CARLOS.

Must—must obey?

QUEEN.

What means this solemn tone?

CARLOS.

Thus much it means:
That Carlos is not one to yield to *must*,
Where he hath power to *will!* It means, besides,
That Carlos is not minded to live on,

The most unhappy man in all this realm,
When it would only cost the overthrow
Of Spanish laws to be the happiest.

QUEEN.

Do I interpret rightly? Still you hope?
Dare you hope on, where all is lost for ever?

CARLOS.

I look on nought as lost—except the dead.

QUEEN.

For me—your mother, do you dare to hope?

[*She fixes a penetrating look on him, then continues with dignity and earnestness.*

And yet why not? A new elected monarch
Can do far more—make bonfires of the laws
His father left—o'erthrow his monuments—
Nay, more than this—for what shall hinder him?—
Drag from his tomb, in the Escurial,
The sacred corpse of his departed sire,
Make it a public spectacle, and scatter
Forth to the winds his desecrated dust.
And then, at last, to fill the measure up,——

CARLOS.

Merciful Heavens, finish not the picture!

QUEEN.

End all by wedding with his mother.

CARLOS.

Oh!

Accursed son!

[*He remains for some time paralysed and speechless*

Yes, now 'tis out, 'tis out!
I see it clear as day. O, would it had
Been veil'd from me in everlasting darkness!
Yes, thou art gone from me—gone—gone for ever
The die is cast; and thou art lost to me.
Oh in that thought lies hell; and a hell, too,
Lies in the other thought, to call thee mine.
Oh misery! I can bear my fate no longer,
My very heart-strings strain as they would burst.

QUEEN.

Alas, alas! dear Charles, I feel it all,
The nameless pang that rages in your breast;

Your pangs are infinite, as is your love,
And infinite as both will be the glory
Of overmastering both. Up, be a man,
Wrestle with them boldly. The prize is worthy
Of a young warrior's high, heroic heart;
Worthy of him in whom the virtues flow
Of a long ancestry of mighty kings.
Courage! my noble Prince! Great Charles's grandson
Begins the contest with undaunted heart,
Where sons of meaner men would yield at once

CARLOS.

Too late, too late! O God, it is too late!

QUEEN.

Too late to be a man! O Carlos, Carlos!
How nobly shows our virtue, when the heart
Breaks in its exercise! The hand of Heaven
Has set you up on high,—far higher, Prince,
Than millions of your brethren. All she took
From others, she bestow'd with partial hand
On thee, her favourite; and millions ask,
What was your merit, thus before your birth
To be endowed so far above mankind?
Up, then, and justify the ways of Heaven;
Deserve to take the lead of all the world,
And make a sacrifice ne'er made before.

CARLOS.

I will, I will:—I have a giant's strength
To win your favour; but to lose you, none.

QUEEN.

Confess, my Carlos, I have harshly read thee;
It is but spleen, and waywardness, and pride,
Attract you thus so madly to your mother!
The heart you lavish on myself, belongs
To the great empire you one day shall rule.
Look, that you sport not with your sacred trust!
Love is your high vocation; until now
It hath been wrongly bent upon your mother:
Oh, lead it back upon your future realms,
And so, instead of the fell stings of conscience,
Enjoy the bliss of being more than man.

Elizabeth has been your earliest love,
Your second must be Spain. How gladly, Carlos,
Will I give place to this more worthy choice!

CARLOS (*overpowered by emotion, throws himself at her feet*).
How great thou art, my angel! Yes, I'll do
All, all thou canst desire. So let it be.

[*He rises.*

Here, in the sight of heaven I stand, and swear—
I swear to thee, eternal—no, great Heaven!—
Eternal silence only,—not oblivion.

QUEEN.
How can I ask from you, what I myself
Am not disposed to grant?

MARQUIS (*hastening from the alley*).
The King!

QUEEN.
Oh God!

MARQUIS.
Away, away! fly from these precincts, Prince.

QUEEN.
His jealousy is dreadful—should he see you——

CARLOS.
I'll stay.

QUEEN.
And who will be the victim, then?

CARLOS (*seizing the* MARQUIS *by the arm*).
Away, away! Come, Roderigo, come!

[*Goes and returns.*

What may I hope to carry hence with me?

QUEEN.
Your mother's friendship.

CARLOS.
Friendship! Mother!

QUEEN.
And
These tears with it—they're from the Netherlands.

[*She gives him some letters.—Exit* CARLOS *with the* MARQUIS. *The* QUEEN *looks restlessly round in search of her ladies, who are nowhere to be seen. As she is about to retire up, the* KING *enters.*

Scene VI.

The King, *the* Queen, Duke Alva, Count Lerma, Domingo, Ladies, Grandees, *who remain at a little distance.*

KING.

How, Madam, alone?—not even one of all
Your ladies in attendance? Strange! Where are they?

QUEEN.

My gracious lord!

KING.

Why thus alone, I say?
[*To his Attendants.*
I'll take a strict account of this neglect.
'Tis not to be forgiven. Who has the charge
Of waiting on your Majesty to-day?

QUEEN.

O be not angry! Good, my Lord, 'tis I
Myself that am to blame—at my request
The Princess Eboli went hence but now.

KING.

At your request!

QUEEN.

To call the nurse to me,
With the Infanta, whom I long'd to see.

KING.

And was your retinue dismiss'd for that?
This only clears the lady first in waiting.
Where was the second?

MONDECAR (*who has returned and mixed with the other ladies, steps forward*).

Your Majesty, I feel
I am to blame for this.

KING.

You are, and so
I give you ten years to reflect upon it,
At a most tranquil distance from Madrid.
[*The Marchioness steps back weeping. General silence. The bystanders all look in confusion towards the* Queen.

QUEEN.

What weep you for, dear Marchioness?

[*To the* KING

If I
Have err'd, my gracious Liege, the crown I wear,
And which I never sought, should save my blushes.
Is there a law in this your kingdom, Sire,
To summon monarchs' daughters to the bar?
Does force alone restrain your Spanish ladies?
Or need they stronger safeguard than their virtue?
Now pardon me, my Liege; 'tis not my wont
To send my ladies, who have served me still
With smiling cheerfulness, away in tears.
Here, Mondecar.

[*She takes off her girdle and presents it to the* MARCHIONESS

You have displeased the King,
Not me. Take this remembrance of my favour,
And of this hour. I'd have you quit the kingdom.
You've only err'd in Spain. In my dear France,
All men are glad to wipe such tears away.
And must I ever be reminded thus?
In my dear France it had been otherwise.

[*Leaning on the* MARCHIONESS *and covering her face*

KING.

Can a reproach, that in my love had birth,
Afflict you so? A word so trouble you,
Which the most anxious tenderness did prompt?

[*He turns towards the Grandees*

Here stand the assembled vassals of my throne.
Did ever sleep descend upon these eyes,
Till at the close of the returning day
I've pondered, how the hearts of all my subjects
Were beating 'neath the furthest cope of Heaven?
And should I feel more anxious for my throne,
Than for the partner of my bosom? No!
My sword and Alva can protect my people,
My eye alone assures thy love.

QUEEN.

My Liege,
If that I have offended—

KING.

I am call'd
The richest monarch in the Christian world;
The sun in my dominions never sets.
All this another hath possess'd before,
And many another will possess hereafter.
That is mine own. All that the monarch hath
Belongs to chance—Elizabeth to Philip.
This is the point in which I feel I'm mortal.

QUEEN.

What fear you, Sire?

KING.

Should these grey hairs not fear?
But the same instant that my fear begins,
It dies away for ever. [*To the Grandees.*
I run o'er
The nobles of my Court, and miss the foremost.
Where is my son, Don Carlos? [*No one answers*
He begins
To give me cause of fear. He shuns my presence,
Since he came back from school at Alcala.
His blood is hot. Why is his look so cold?
His bearing all so stately and reserved?
Be watchful, Duke, I charge you.

ALVA.

So I am:
Long as a heart against this corslet beats,
So long may Philip slumber undisturb'd;
And as God's Cherub guards the gates of heaven,
So doth Duke Alva guard your royal throne.

LERMA.

Dare I, in all humility, presume
To oppose the judgment of earth's wisest King?
Too deeply I revere his gracious sire,
To judge the son so harshly. I fear much
From his hot blood, but nothing from his heart.

KING.

Lerma, your speech is fair, to soothe the father,
But Alva here will be the monarch's shield—
No more of this.

[*Turning to his Suite*

Now speed we to Madrid,
Our royal duties summon us. The plague
Of heresy is rife among my people;
Rebellion stalks within my Netherlands—
The times are imminent. We must arrest
These erring spirits by some dread example.
The solemn oath which every Christian King
Hath sworn to keep, I will redeem to-morrow.
'Twill be a day of doom unparallel'd.
Our Court is bidden to the festival.

[*He leads off the* QUEEN, *the rest follow.*

SCENE VII.

DON CARLOS (*with letters in his hand*), *and* MARQUIS POSA, *enter from opposite sides.*

CARLOS.

I am resolved—Flanders shall yet be saved:
So runs her suit—and that's enough for me!

MARQUIS.

There's not another moment to be lost:
'Tis said Duke Alva, in the Cabinet,
Is named already as the Governor.

CARLOS.

Betimes, to-morrow, will I seek the King,
And ask this office for myself. It is
The first request I ever made to him,
And he can scarce refuse. My presence here
Has long been irksome to him. He will grasp
This fair pretence my absence to secure.
And shall I confess to thee, Roderigo?—
My hopes go further. Face to face with him,
'Tis possible, the pleading of a son
May reinstate him in his father's favour.
He ne'er hath heard the voice of nature speak;
Then let me try for once, my Roderigo,
What power she hath when breathing from my lips.

MARQUIS.

Now do I hear my Carlos' voice once more:
Now are you all yourself again!

Scene VIII.

The preceding. Count Lerma.

COUNT.

Your Grace,
His Majesty has left Aranjuez;
And I am bidden——

CARLOS.

Very well, my lord—
I shall o'ertake the King—

MARQUIS (*affecting to take leave with ceremony*).

Your Highness, then,
Has nothing further to intrust to me?

CARLOS.

Nothing. A pleasant journey to Madrid!
You may, hereafter, tell me more of Flanders.
[*To* Lerma, *who is waiting for him.*
Proceed, my lord! I'll follow thee anon.

Scene IX.

Don Carlos, Marquis Posa

CARLOS.

I understood thy hint, and thank thee for it.
A stranger's presence can alone excuse
This forced and measured tone. Are we not brothers?
In future, let this puppet-play of rank
Be banish'd from our friendship. Think that we
Had met at some gay masking festival,
Thou in the habit of a slave, and I
Robed, for a jest, in the imperial purple.
Throughout the revel we respect the cheat,
And play our parts with sportive earnestness,
Tripping it gaily with the merry throng;
But should thy Carlos beckon through his mask,
Thou'dst press his hand in silence as he pass'd,
And we should be as one.

MARQUIS.

The dream's divine!
But are you sure, that it will last for ever?
Is Carlos, then, so certain of himself,
As to despise the charms of boundless sway?
A day will come—an all-important day—

When this heroic mind—I warn you now—
Will sink o'erwhelm'd by too severe a test.
Don Philip dies; and Carlos mounts the throne,
The mightiest throne in Christendom. How vast
The gulph that yawns betwixt mankind and him,
A god to-day, who yesterday was man!
Steel'd to all human weakness—to the voice
Of heavenly duty deaf. Humanity,—
To-day a word of import in his ear,—
Barters itself, and grovels 'mid the throng
Of gaping parasites;—his sympathy
For human wo is turn'd to cold neglect,
His virtue sunk in loose voluptuous joys.
Peru supplies him riches for his folly,
His court engenders devils for his vices.
Lull'd in this heaven, the work of crafty slaves,
He sleeps a charmed sleep; and while his dream
Endures, his godhead lasts. And wo to him,
Who'd break, in pity, this lethargic trance!
What could Roderigo do? Friendship is true,
And bold as true. But her bright flashing beams
Were much too fierce for sickly majesty:
You would not brook a subject's stern appeal,
Nor I, a monarch's pride!

CARLOS.

Fearful and true,
Thy portraiture of monarchs. Yes—thou'rt right.
But 'tis their lusts that thus corrupt their hearts,
And hurry them to vice. I still am pure.
A youth scarce numbering three-and-twenty years.
What thousands waste in riotous delights,
Without remorse—the mind's more precious part—
The bloom and strength of manhood—I have kept,
Hoarding their treasures for the future king.
What could unseat my Posa from my heart,
If women fail to do it?

MARQUIS.

I, myself!
Say, could I love you, Carlos, warm as now,
If I must fear you?

CARLOS.

That will never be.
What need hast thou of me? What cause hast thou
To stoop thy knee, a suppliant at the throne?
Does gold allure thee? Thou'rt a richer subject,
Than I shall be a king! Dost covet honours?
E'en in thy youth, fame's brimming chalice stood
Full in thy grasp—thou flung'st the toy away.
Which of us, then, must be the other's debtor,
And which the creditor? Thou standest mute.
Dost tremble for the trial? Art thou. then,
Uncertain of thyself?

MARQUIS.

Carlos, I yield!
Here is my hand.

CARLOS.

Is it mine own?

MARQUIS.

For ever—
In the most pregnant meaning of the word!

CARLOS.

And wilt thou prove hereafter to the King,
As true and warm as to the Prince to-day?

MARQUIS.

I swear!

CARLOS.

And when round my unguarded heart
The serpent flattery winds its subtle coil,
Should e'er these eyes of mine forget the tears
They once were wont to shed; or should these ears
Be closed to mercy's plea.—say, wilt thou, then,
The fearless guardian of my virtue, throw
Thine iron grasp upon me, and call up
My genius by its mighty name?

MARQUIS.

I will.

CARLOS.

And now one other favour let me beg.
Do call me *thou!* Long have I envied this
Dear privilege of friendship to thine equals.
The brother's *thou* beguiles my ear, my heart,

With sweet suggestions of equality.
Nay, no reply:—I guess what thou wouldst say—
To thee this seems a trifle—but to me,
A monarch's son, 'tis much. Say, wilt thou be
A brother to me?

MARQUIS.

Yes; thy brother, yes!

CARLOS.

Now to the King—my fears are at an end:
Thus, arm in arm with thee, I dare defy
The universal world into the lists. [*Exeunt*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Royal Palace at Madrid.

KING PHILIP *under a canopy;* DUKE ALVA, *at some distance, with his head covered;* CARLOS.

CARLOS.

The kingdom takes precedence—willingly
Doth Carlos to the Minister give place—
He speaks for Spain; I am but of the household.
[*Bows and steps backward*

KING.

The Duke remains—the Infanta may proceed.

CARLOS (*turning to* ALVA).

Then must I put it to your honour, sir,
To yield my father for a while to me.
A son, you know, may to a father's ear
Unbosom much, in fulness of his heart,
That not befits a stranger's ear. The King
Shall not be taken from you, sir—I seek
The father only for one little hour.

KING.

Here stands his friend.

CARLOS.

And have I e'er deserved
To think the Duke should be a friend of mine?

KING.

Or tried to make him one? I scarce can love
Those sons who choose more wisely than their fathers.

CARLOS.

And can Duke Alva's knightly spirit brook
To look on such a scene? Now, as I live,
I would not play the busy meddler's part,
Who thrusts himself, unask'd, 'twixt sire and son,
And there intrudes without a blush, condemn'd
By his own conscious insignificance,
No, not, by Heaven, to win a diadem!

KING (*rising, with an angry look at the Prince*).

Retire, my lord!

[ALVA *goes to the principal door, through which* CARLOS *had entered, the* KING *points to the other.*

No, to the Cabinet,
Until I call you.

SCENE II.

KING PHILIP. DON CARLOS.

CARLOS (*as soon as the* DUKE *has left the Apartment, advances to the* KING, *throws himself at his feet, and then, with great emotion*)

My father once again!
Thanks, endless thanks, for this unwonted favour!
Your hand, my father! O delightful day!
The rapture of this kiss has long been strange
To your poor Carlos. Wherefore have I been
Shut from my father's heart? What have I done?

KING.

Carlos, thou art a novice in these arts—
Forbear, I like them not——

CARLOS (*rising*).

And is it so!
I hear your courtiers in those words, my father!
All is not well, by Heaven, all is not true,
That a priest says, and a priest's creatures plot.
I am not wicked, father; ardent blood
Is all my failing;—all my crime is youth;—
Wicked I am not—no, in truth, not wicked;—
Tho' many an impulse wild assails my heart,
Yet is it still untainted.

KING.

Ay, 'tis pure—
I know it—like thy prayers——

CARLOS.

Now, then, or never!—
We are, for once, alone—the barrier
Of courtly form, that sever'd sire and son,
Has fallen! Now a golden ray of hope
Illumes my soul—a sweet presentiment
Pervades my heart—and heaven itself inclines
With choirs of joyous angels, to the earth,
And full of soft emotion, the thrice blest
Looks down upon this great, this glorious scene!—
Pardon, my father!

[*He falls on his knees before him.*

KING.

Rise, and leave me.

CARLOS.

Father!

KING (*tearing himself from him*).

This trifling grows too bold.

CARLOS.

A son's devotion
Too bold! Alas!

KING.

And, to crown all, in tears!
Degraded boy! Away, and quit my sight!

CARLOS.

Now, then, or never!—Pardon, O my father!

KING.

Away, and leave my sight! Return to me
Disgraced, defeated, from the battle-field,
Thy sire shall meet thee with extended arms:
But thus in tears, I spurn thee from my feet
A coward's guilt alone should wash its stains
In such ignoble streams. The man who weeps
Without a blush, will ne'er want cause for tears!

CARLOS.

Who is this man? By what mistake of Nature
Has he thus stray'd amongst mankind? A tear
Is man's unerring, lasting attribute.

Whose eye is dry was ne'er of woman born!
O! teach the eye that ne'er hath overflowed,
The timely science of a tear—thou'lt need
The moist relief in some dark hour of woe.

KING.

Think'st thou to shake thy father's strong mistrust
With specious words?

CARLOS.

Mistrust! Then I'll remove it—
Here will I hang upon my father's breast,
Strain at his heart with vigour, till each shred
Of that mistrust, which, with a rock's endurance,
Clings firmly round it, piecemeal fall away.
And who are they who drive me from the King
My father's favour?—What requital hath
A monk to give a father for a son?—
What compensation can the Duke supply
For a deserted and a childless age?
Wouldst thou be loved? Here in this bosom springs
A fresher, purer fountain, than e'er flowed
From those dark, stagnant, muddy reservoirs,
Which Philip's gold must first unlock.

KING.

No more,
Presuming boy! For know the hearts thou slanderest,
Are the approved, true servants of my choice.
'Tis meet that thou do honour to them.

CARLOS.

Never!
I know my worth—all that your Alva dares—
That, and much more, can Carlos. What cares he,
A hireling! for the welfare of the realm
That never can be his? What careth he,
If Philip's hair grow gray with hoary age?
Your Carlos would have loved you:—O! I dread
To think that you the royal throne must fill
Deserted and alone.

KING (*seemingly struck by this idea, stands in deep thought: after a pause*).

I am alone!

CARLOS (*approaching him with eagerness*).

You have been so till now. Hate me no more,

And I will love you dearly, as a son:
But hate me now no longer! O! how sweet,
Divinely sweet it is, to feel our being
Reflected in another's beauteous soul;
To see our joys gladden another's cheek,
Our pains bring anguish to another's bosom,
Our sorrows fill another's eye with tears!
How sweet, how glorious is it, hand in hand,
With a dear child, in inmost soul beloved,
To tread once more the rosy paths of youth,
And dream life's fond illusions o'er again!
How proud to live through endless centuries,
Immortal in the virtues of a son;
How sweet to plant what his dear hand shall reap;
To gather what will yield him rich return,
And guess how high his thanks will one day rise!
My father, of this early paradise
Your monks most wisely speak not.

KING (*not without emotion*).

O, my son,
Thou hast condemn'd thyself, in painting thus
A bliss this heart hath ne'er enjoyed from thee!

CARLOS.

Th' Omniscient be my judge! You till this hour
Have still debarr'd me from your heart, and all
Participation in your royal cares.
The heir of Spain has been a very stranger
In Spanish land—a prisoner in the realm
Where he must one day rule. Say, was this just,
Or kind? And often have I blush'd for shame,
And stood with eyes abash'd, to learn perchance,
From foreign envoys, or the general rumour,
Thy courtly doings at Aranjuez.

KING.

Thy blood flows far too hotly in thy veins.
Thou wouldst but ruin all.

CARLOS.

But try me, father.
'Tis true my blood flows hotly in my veins.
Full three-and-twenty years I now have lived,
And nought achieved for immortality.
I am aroused—I feel my inward powers—

My title to the throne arouses me
From slumber, like an angry creditor;
And all the mis-spent hours of early youth,
Like debts of honour, clamour in mine ears
It comes at length, the glorious moment comes,
That claims full interest on the entrusted talent.
The annals of the world, ancestral fame,
And glory's echoing trumpet urge me on.
Now is the blessed hour at length arrived
That opens wide to me the lists of honour.
My King, my father!—dare I utter now
The suit which led me hither?

KING.

Still a suit?
Unfold it.

CARLOS.

The rebellion in Brabant
Increases to a height—the traitors' madness
By stern, but prudent, vigour must be met.
The Duke, to quell the wild enthusiasm,
Invested with the sovereign's power, will lead
An army into Flanders. O, how full
Of glory is such office!—and how suited
To open wide the temple of renown
To me, your son! To my hand, then, O King,
Entrust the army; in thy Flemish lands
I am well loved, and I will freely gage
My life, for their fidelity and truth.

KING.

Thou speakest like a dreamer. This high office
Demands a man—and not a stripling's arm.

CARLOS.

It but demands a human being, father:
And that is what Duke Alva ne'er hath been.

KING.

Terror alone can tie rebellion's hands:
Humanity were madness. Thy soft soul
Is tender, son: they'll tremble at the Duke.
Desist from thy request.

CARLOS.

Despatch me, Sire,
To Flanders with the army—dare rely
E'en on my tender soul. The name of Prince,
The royal name emblazoned on my standard,
Conquers where Alva's butchers but dismay.
Here on my knees I crave it—this the first
Petition of my life.—Trust Flanders to me.

KING (*contemplating* CARLOS *with a piercing look*).

Trust my best army to thy thirst for rule,
And put a dagger in my murderer's hand!

CARLOS.

Great God! and is this all—is this the fruit
Of a momentous hour so long desired!
[*After some thought, in a milder tone.*
Oh, speak to me more kindly—send me not
Thus comfortless away—dismiss me not
With this afflicting answer, oh, my father!
Use me more tenderly, indeed I need it.
This is the last resource of wild despair—
It conquers every pow'r of firm resolve
To bear it as a man—this deep contempt—
My ev'ry suit denied: Let me away—
Unheard and foil'd in all my fondest hopes,
I take my leave. Now Alva and Domingo
May proudly sit in triumph, where your son
Lies weeping in the dust. Your crowd of courtiers,
And your long train of cringing, trembling nobles,
Your tribe of sallow monks, so deadly pale,
All witness'd how you granted me this audience.
Let me not be disgraced—O, strike me not
With this most deadly wound—nor lay me bare
To sneering insolence of menial taunts!
" That strangers riot on your bounty, whilst
Carlos, your son, may supplicate in vain."
And as a pledge that you would have me honour'd,
Despatch me straight to Flanders with the army.

KING.

Urge thy request no further—as thou wouldst
Avoid the King's displeasure.

CARLOS.

I must brave
My King's displeasure, and prefer my suit
Once more, it is the last. Trust Flanders to me!
I must away from Spain. To linger here
Is to draw breath beneath the headsman's axe:
The air lies heavy on me in Madrid,
Like murder on a guilty soul—a change,
An instant change of clime alone can cure me.
If you would save my life, despatch me straight
Without delay to Flanders.

KING (*with affected coldness*).

Invalids,
Like thee, my son—need to be tended close,
And ever watched by the physician's eye—
Thou stay'st in Spain—the Duke will go to Flanders.

CARLOS (*wildly*).

Assist me, ye good angels!

KING (*starting*).

Hold, what mean
These looks so wild?

CARLOS.

Father, do you abide
Immoveably by this determination?

KING.

It was the King's.

CARLOS.

Then my commission's done.

[*Exit in violent emotion.*

Scene III.

King, sunk in gloomy contemplation, walks a few steps up and down; Alva approaches with embarrassment.

KING.

Hold yourself ready to depart for Brussels,
Upon a moment's notice.

ALVA.

I am ready
All is prepared, my Liege.

KING.

And your credentials
Lie ready seal'd within my cabinet,—
Meanwhile obtain an audience of the Queen,
And bid the Prince farewell.

ALVA.

As I came in
I met him with a look of frenzy wild
Quitting the chamber; and your Majesty
Is strangely moved, methinks, and bears the marks
Of deep excitement—can it be the theme
Of your discourse——

KING.

Concerned the Duke of Alva.
[*The* KING *keeps his eye stedfastly fixed on him.*
I'm pleas'd that Carlos hates my councillors,
But I'm disturb'd that he—despises them.
[ALVA, *colouring deeply, is about to speak.*
No answer now: propitiate the Prince.

ALVA.

Sire!

KING.

Tell me, who it was that warn'd me first
Of my son's dark designs? I listened then
To you, and not to him. I will have proof.
And for the future, mark me, Carlos stands
Nearer the throne—now Duke—you may retire.
[*The* KING *retires into his cabinet. Exit* DUKE *by another door.*

SCENE IV.

The Antechamber to the QUEEN'S *Apartments.* DON CARLOS *enters in conversation with a* PAGE. *The Attendants retire at his approach.*

CARLOS.

For me this letter? And a key! How's this?
And both delivered with such mystery!
Come nearer boy:—from whom didst thou receive them!

PAGE (*mysteriously*).

It seem'd to me the Lady would be guess'd
Rather than be described.

CARLOS (*starting*).

The Lady, what!
Who art thou, Boy? [*Looking earnestly at the* PAGE.

PAGE.

A Page that serves the Queen.

CARLOS (*affrighted, putting his hand to the* PAGE'S *mouth*).

Hold, on your life! I know enough: no more.

[*He tears open the letter hastily, and retires to read it; meanwhile* DUKE ALVA *comes, and passing the Prince, goes unperceived by him into the* QUEEN'S *apartment.* CARLOS *trembles violently and changes colour; when he has read the letter he remains a long time speechless, his eyes steadfastly fixed on it, at last he turns to the* PAGE.

She gave you this herself?

PAGE.

With her own hands.

CARLOS.

She gave this letter to you then herself?
Deceive me not: I ne'er have seen her writing,
And I must credit thee, if thou canst swear it;
But if thy tale be false, confess it straight,
Nor put this fraud on me.

PAGE.

This fraud, on whom?

CARLOS (*looking once more at the letter, then at the* PAGE *with doubt and earnestness*).

Your parents—are they living? and your father—
Serves he the King?—Is he a Spaniard born?—

PAGE.

He fell a Colonel on St. Quentin's field,
Served in the cavalry of Savoy's Duke—
His name Alonzo, Count of Henarez.

CARLOS (*taking his hand, and looking fixedly in his eyes*).

The King gave you this letter?

PAGE (*with emotion*).

Gracious Prince,
Have I deserved these doubts?

CARLOS (*reading the letter*).

" This key unlocks
The back apartments in the Queen's pavilion.
The furthest room lies next a cabinet
Wherein no listener's foot dare penetrate;
Here may the voice of love without restraint
Confess those tender feelings, which till now
The heart with silent looks alone hath spoken.
The timid lover gains an audience here,
And sweet reward repays his secret sorrow."

[*As if awakening from a reverie.*

I am not in a dream, I do not rave,—
This is my right hand, this my sword—and these
Are written words. 'Tis true—it is no dream.
I am beloved, I feel I am beloved.

[*Unable to contain himself, he rushes hastily through the room, and raises his arms to heaven.*

PAGE.

Follow me, Prince, and I will lead the way.

CARLOS.

Then let me first collect my scatter'd thoughts.
The alarm of joy still trembles in my bosom.
Did I e'er lift my fondest hopes so high,
Or trust my fancy to so bold a flight?
Show me the man can learn thus suddenly
To be a god. I am not what I was.
I feel another heaven—another sun
That was not here before. She loves—she loves me!

PAGE (*leading him forward*).

But this is not the place: Prince! you forget.

CARLOS.

The King! My father!

[*His arms sink, he casts a timid look around, then collecting himself.*

This is dreadful!—Yes,
You're right, my friend. I thank you: I was not
Just then myself. To be compell'd to silence,
And bury in my heart this mighty bliss,
Is terrible!

[*Taking the* PAGE *by the hand, and leading him aside.*

Now hear! What thou hast seen,
And what not seen, must be within thy breast

Entomb'd as in the grave. So now depart;
I shall not need thy guidance; they must not
Surprise us here! Now go.

[*The* PAGE *is about to depart.*
Yet hold, a word!

[*The* PAGE *returns.*—CARLOS *lays his hand on his shoulder, and looks him steadily in the face.*

A direful secret hast thou in thy keeping,
Which, like a poison of terrific power,
Shivers the cup that holds it into atoms.
Guard every look of thine, nor let thy head
Guess at thy bosom's secret. Be thou like
The senseless speaking trumpet that receives
And echoes back the voice, but hears it not.
Thou art a boy! Be ever so—continue
The pranks of youth. My correspondent chose
Her messenger of love with prudent skill!
The King will ne'er suspect a serpent here.

PAGE.

And I, my Prince, shall feel right proud to know
I am one secret richer than the King.

CARLOS.

Vain, foolish boy!—'tis this should make thee tremble.
Approach me ever with a cold respect:
Ne'er be induced by idle pride to boast
How gracious is the Prince! No deadlier sin
Canst thou commit, my son, than pleasing me.
What'er thou hast in future for my ear,
Give not to words—entrust not to thy lips,
Ne'er on that common high road of the thoughts
Permit thy news to travel.—Speak with an eye,
A finger—I will answer with a look.
The very air, the light, are Philip's creatures,
And the deaf walls around are in his pay.
Some one approaches; fly, we'll meet again.

[*The Queen's Chamber opens, and* DUKE ALVA *comes out.*

PAGE.

Be careful, Prince, to find the right apartment. [*Exit.*

CARLOS.

It is the Duke! Fear not, I'll find the way.

Scene V.

Don Carlos. Duke of Alva.

ALVA (*meeting him*).

Two words, most gracious Prince.

CARLOS.

Some other time. [*Going.*

ALVA.

The place is not the fittest, I confess;
Perhaps your royal highness may be pleased
To grant me audience in your private chamber.

CARLOS.

For what? And why not here? Only be brief.

ALVA.

The special object which has brought me hither,
Is to return your Highness lowly thanks
For your good services.

CARLOS.

Thanks! thanks to me—
For what? Duke Alva's thanks!

ALVA.

You scarce had left
His Majesty, ere I received in form
Instructions to depart for Brussels.

CARLOS.

What!
For Brussels!

ALVA.

And to what, most gracious Prince,
Must I ascribe this favour but to you—
Your intercession with the King?

CARLOS.

O, no!
Not in the least to me:—but, Duke, you travel,
So Heav'n be with your Grace!

ALVA.

And is this all?
It seems, indeed, most strange! And has your Highness
No further orders, then, to send to Flanders?

CARLOS.

What should I have?

ALVA.

Not long ago, it seem'd,
That country's fate required your presence.

CARLOS.

How?
But yes, you're right,—it was so formerly;
But now this change is better as it is.

ALVA.

I am amazed——

CARLOS.

You are an able General,
No one doubts that—envy herself must own it.
For me, I'm but a youth—so thought the King.
The King was right, quite right. I see it now
Myself, and am content—and so no more.
God speed your journey, as you see, just now
My hands are full, and weighty business presses.
The rest to-morrow, or whene'er you will,
Or when you come from Brussels.

ALVA.

What is this?

CARLOS.

The season favours, and your route will lie
Through Milan, Lorraine, Burgundy, and on
To Germany! What, Germany? Ay, true,
In Germany it was—they know you there.
'Tis April now, May, June,—in July, then,
Just so! or at the latest, soon in August,—
You will arrive in Brussels, and no doubt
We soon shall hear of your victorious deeds.
You know the way to win our high esteem,
And earn the crown of fame

ALVA (*significantly*).

Indeed! condemn'd
By my own conscious insignificance!

CARLOS.

You're sensitive, my Lord, and with some cause,
I own it was not fair to use a weapon
Against your Grace you were unskill'd to wield.

ALVA.

Unskill'd!

CARLOS.

'Tis pity I've no leisure now
To fight this worthy battle fairly out:
But at some other time, we——

ALVA.

Prince, we both
Miscalculate—but still in opposite ways.
You, for example, overrate your age
By twenty years, whilst on the other hand,
I, by as many, underrate it—

CARLOS.

Well!

ALVA.

And this suggests the thought, how many nights
Beside his lovely Lusitanian bride—
Your mother—would the King right gladly give
To buy an arm like this, to aid his crown.
Full well he knows, far easier is the task
To make a monarch than a monarchy;
Far easier too, to stock the world with kings
Than frame an empire for a king to rule.

CARLOS.

Most true, Duke Alva, yet——

ALVA.

And how much blood,
Your subjects' dearest blood, must flow in streams
Before two drops could make a king of you.

CARLOS.

Most true, by Heaven! and in two words comprised,
All that the pride of merit has to urge
Against the pride of fortune. But the moral—
Now, Duke Alva!

ALVA.

Wo to the nursling babe
Of royalty, that mocks the careful hand
Which fosters it! How calmly it may sleep
On the soft cushion of our victories!
The monarch's crown is bright with sparkling gems,
But no eye sees the wounds that purchased them.

This sword has given our laws to distant realms.
Has blazed before the banner of the cross,
And in these quarters of the globe, has traced
Ensanguin'd furrows for the seed of faith.
God was the judge in heaven, and I on earth.

CARLOS.

God, or the Devil—it little matters which;
Yours was his chosen arm—that stands confess'd.
And now no more of this. Some thoughts there are
Whereof the memory pains me. I respect
My father's choice,—my father needs an Alva!
But that he needs him is not just the point
I envy in him: a great man you are,
This may be true, and I well nigh believe it,
Only I fear your mission is begun
Some thousand years too soon. Alva, methinks,
Were just the man to suit the end of time.
Then when the giant insolence of vice
Shall have exhausted Heaven's enduring patience,
And the rich waving harvest of misdeeds
Stands in full ear, and asks a matchless reaper,
Then should you fill the post. O God! my Paradise!
My Flanders! But of this I must not think.
'Tis said you carry with you a full store
Of sentences of death already signed.
This shows a prudent foresight! No more need
To fear your foes' designs, or secret plots:
O, father! ill indeed I've understood thee,
Calling thee harsh, to save me from a post,
Where Alva's self alone can fitly shine!—
'Twas an unerring token of your love.

ALVA.

These words deserve——

CARLOS.

What!

ALVA.

But your birth protects you.

CARLOS (*seizing his sword*).

That calls for blood! Duke, draw your sword.

ALVA (*slightingly*).

On whom?

CARLOS (*pressing upon him*).

Draw, or I run you through.

ALVA.

Then be it so. [*They fight.*

SCENE VI

The QUEEN, DON CARLOS, DUKE ALVA.

QUEEN (*coming from her room alarmed*).

How! naked swords?

[*To the* PRINCE *in an indignant and commanding tone.*

Prince Carlos!

CARLOS (*agitated at the* QUEEN'S *look, drops his arm, stands motionless, then runs to the* DUKE, *and embraces him.*

Pardon Duke!

Your pardon, Sir!—Forget, forgive it all!

[*Throws himself in silence at the* QUEEN'S *feet, then rising suddenly, departs in confusion.*

ALVA.

By Heaven, 'tis strange!

QUEEN (*remains a few moments as if in doubt, then retiring to her Apartment*).

A word with you, Duke Alva. [*Exit followed by the* DUKE.

SCENE VII.

The PRINCESS EBOLI'S *Apartment.*

The PRINCESS *in a simple but elegant dress, playing on the Lute. The* QUEEN'S PAGE *enters.*

PRINCESS (*starting up suddenly*).

He comes!

PAGE (*abruptly*).

Are you alone? I wonder much
He is not here already; but he must
Be here upon the instant.

PRINCESS.

Do you say *must?*
Then he *will* come, this much is certain then.

PAGE.

He's close upon my steps. You are beloved,
Adored, and with more passionate regard
Than mortal ever was, or can be loved.
O! what a scene I witnessed!

PRINCESS (*impatiently draws him to her*).

Quick, you spoke
With him! What said he? Tell me straight—
How did he look? what were his words? And say—
Did he appear embarrass'd, or confused?
And did he guess who sent the key to him?
Be quick!—or did he not? He did not guess
At all, perhaps! or guess'd amiss! Come, speak,
How! not a word to answer me? Oh fie!
You never were so dull—so slow before,
'Tis past all patience.

PAGE.

Dearest Lady, hear me!
Both key and note I placed within his hands,
In the Queen's antechamber, and he started
And gazed with wonder when I told him that
A lady sent me!

PRINCESS.

Did he start? go on!
That's excellent.—Proceed, what next ensued?

PAGE.

I would have told him more, but he grew pale,
And snatch'd the letter from my hand, and said,
With look of deadly menace, he knew all.
He read the letter with confusion thro',
And straight began to tremble.

PRINCESS.

He knew all!
He knew it all? Were those his very words?

PAGE

He ask'd me, and again he ask'd, if you
With your own hands had given me the letter?

PRINCESS.

If I? Then did he mention me by name?

PAGE.

By name! no name he mention'd: there might be
Listeners, he said about the palace, who
Might to the King disclose it.

PRINCESS (*surprised*).

Said he that?

PAGE.

He further said, it much concern'd the King;
Deeply concern'd—to know of that same letter.

PRINCESS.

The King! Nay, are you sure you heard him right?
The King! Was that the very word he used?

PAGE.

It was. He call'd it a most perilous secret,
And warn'd me to be strictly on my guard,
Never with word or look to give the King
Occasion for suspicion.

PRINCESS (*after a pause with astonishment*).

All agrees!
It can be nothing else—he must have heard
The tale—'tis very strange! Who could have told him
I wonder who? The eagle eye of Love
Alone could pierce so far. But tell me further—
He read the letter,—

PAGE.

Which, he said, convey'd
Such bliss as made him tremble, and till then
He had not dared to dream of. As he spoke,
The Duke, by evil chance, approach'd the room,
And this compell'd us——

PRINCESS (*angrily*).

What in all the world
Could bring the Duke to him at such a time?
What can detain him? Why appears he not?
See how you've been deceived; how truly blest
Might he have been already—in the time
You've taken to describe his wishes to me!

PAGE.

The Duke, I fear——

PRINCESS.

Again, the Duke! What can
The Duke want here? What should a warrior want
With my soft dreams of happiness? He should
Have left him there, or sent him from his presence.
Where is the man may not be treated thus?
But Carlos seems as little versed in love
As in a woman's heart—he little knows
What minutes are. But hark! I hear a step;
Away, away. [PAGE *hastens out.*
Where have I laid my lute,
I must not seem to wait for him. My song
Shall be a signal to him.

SCENE VIII.

The PRINCESS, DON CARLOS.

The PRINCESS *has thrown herself upon an ottoman, and plays*

CARLOS (*rushes in, he recognises the* PRINCESS, *and stands thunderstruck*).

Gracious Heav'n!
Where am I?

PRINCESS (*lets her lute fall, and meeting him*).

What! Prince Carlos! yes, in truth.

CARLOS.

Where am I? Senseless error, I have miss'd
The right apartment.

PRINCESS.

With what dexterous skill
Carlos contrives to hit the very room
Where ladies sit alone!

CARLOS.

Your pardon, Princess!
I found—I found the antechamber open.

PRINCESS.

Can it be possible? I fastened it
Myself; at least I thought so——

CARLOS.

Ay! you thought.
You only thought so—rest assured you did not.
You meant to lock it, that I well believe:

But most assuredly it was not locked.
A lute's sweet sounds attracted me, some hand
Touch'd it with skill; say, was it not a lute?
[*Looking round inquiringly*
Yes, there it lies, and Heaven can bear me witness
I love the lute to madness. I became
All ear, forgot myself in the sweet strain,
And rush'd into the chamber to behold
The lovely eyes of the divine musician,
Who charm'd me with the magic of her tones

PRINCESS.

Innocent curiosity, no doubt!
But it was soon appeased—as I can prove—
[*After a short silence, significantly.*
I must respect the modesty, that has,
To spare a woman's blushes, thus involved
Itself in so much fiction.

CARLOS (*with sincerity*).

Nay, I feel
I but augment my deep embarrassment,
In vain attempt to extricate myself.
Excuse me from a part I cannot play
In this remote apartment, you perhaps
Have sought a refuge from the world—to pour
The inmost wishes of your secret heart
Remote from man's distracting eye. By me,
Unhappy that I am, your heavenly dreams
Are all disturb'd—and the atonement now
Must be my speedy absence. [*Going.*

PRINCESS (*surprised and confused, but immediately recovering herself*)

O! that step
Were cruel, Prince, indeed!

CARLOS.

Princess, I feel
What such a look in such a place imports:
This virtuous embarrassment has claims
To which my manhood never can be deaf.
Wo to the wretch whose boldness takes new fire
From the pure blush of maiden modesty!
I am a coward when a woman trembles.

Is't possible?—Such noble self-control
In one so young, and he a monarch's son!
Now, Prince, indeed you shall remain with me,
It is my own request, and you must stay.
Near such high virtue, every maiden fear
Takes wing at once; but your appearance here
Disturb'd me in a favourite air, and now
Your penalty shall be to hear me sing it.

CARLOS (*sits down near the* PRINCESS, *not without reluctance*).

A penalty delightful as the sin!
And sooth to say, the subject of the song
Was so divine, again and yet again
I'd gladly hear it.

PRINCESS.

What! you heard it all?
Nay that was too bad, Prince. It was, I think,
A song of love.

CARLOS.

And of successful love,
If I mistake not—dear delicious theme
From those most beauteous lips—but scarce so true,
Methinks, as beautiful.

PRINCESS.

What! not so true?
Then do you doubt the tale?

CARLOS.

I almost doubt
That Carlos and the Princess Eboli,
When they discourse on such a theme as love,
May not quite understand each other's hearts.
[*The* PRINCESS *starts; he observes it, and continues with playful gallantry.*
Who would believe those rosy-tinted cheeks
Conceal'd a heart torn by the pangs of love.
Is it within the range of wayward chance
That the fair Princess Eboli should sigh
Unheard—unanswer'd? Love is only known
By him who hopelessly persists in love.

PRINCESS (*with all her former vivacity*).

Hush! what a dreadful thought! this fate indeed
Appears to follow you of all mankind,
Especially to day.
[*Taking his hand with insinuating interest*
You are not happy,
Dear Prince—you're sad! I know too well you suffer,
And wherefore, Prince? When with such loud appeal
The world invites you to enjoy its bliss—
And nature on you pours her bounteous gifts,
And spreads around you, all life's sweetest joys.
You, a great monarch's son, and more—far more—
E'en in your cradle with such gifts endow'd
As far eclipsed the splendour of your rank.
You, who in those strict courts where women rule,
And pass, without appeal, unerring sentence
On manly worth and honour, even there
Find partial judges.—You, who with a look
Can prove victorious, and whose very coldness
Kindles a flame; and who, when warm'd with passion,
Can make a Paradise, and scatter round
The bliss of heaven, the rapture of the gods.
The man whom nature has adorned with gifts
To render thousands happy, gifts which she
Bestows on few——that such a man as this
Should know what mis'ry is!——Thou, gracious Heaven,
That gav'st him all those blessings, why deny
Him eyes to see the conquests he has made?

CARLOS (*who has been lost in absence of mind, suddenly recovers himself by the silence of the* PRINCESS, *and starts up*).

Charming! inimitable! Princess, sing
That passage pray again.

PRINCESS (*looking at him with astonishment*).

Where, Carlos, were
Your thoughts the while?

CARLOS (*jumps up*).

By Heaven, you do remind me
In proper time—I must away—and quickly.

PRINCESS (*holding him back*).

Whither away?

CARLOS.

Into the open air.
Nay, do not hold me, Princess, for I feel
As tho' the world behind me were in flames.

PRINCESS (*holding him forcibly back*).

What troubles you?—Whence come these strange, these wild
Unnatural looks?—Nay, answer me—

[CARLOS *stops to reflect, she draws him to the sofa to her.*

Dear Carlos,
You need repose, your blood is feverish.
Come sit by me: dispel these gloomy fancies.
Ask yourself frankly, can your head explain
The tumult of your heart—and if it can—
Say, can no knight be found in all the court,
No lady, generous as fair, to cure you—
Rather, I should have said, to understand you?—
What, no one?

CARLOS (*hastily, without thinking*).

If the Princess Eboli—

PRINCESS (*delighted, quickly*).

Indeed!

CARLOS.

Would write a letter for me, a few words
Of kindly intercession, to my father—
They say your influence is great.

PRINCESS.

Who says so?
Ha! was it jealousy that held thee mute! [*Aside.*

CARLOS.

Perchance my story is already public.
I had a sudden wish to visit Brabant,
Merely to win my spurs—no more. The King,
Kind soul, is fearful the fatigues of war
Might spoil my singing!

PRINCESS.

Prince, you play me false.
Confess that, by this serpent subterfuge,
You would mislead me. Look me in the face,
Deceitful one! and say, would he whose thoughts
Were only bent on warlike deeds—would he

E'er stoop so low as, with deceitful hand,
To steal fair ladies' ribbons, when they drop,
And then—your pardon! hoard them—with such care?
[*With light action she opens his shirt frill, and seizes a ribbon which is there concealed.*

CARLOS (*drawing back with amazement*).

Nay, Princess—that's too much—I am betray'd.—
You're not to be deceived.—You are in league
With spirits and with demons!

PRINCESS.

Are you then
Surprised at this? What will you wager, Carlos,
But I recall some stories to your heart?
Nay, try it with me; ask whate'er you please.
And if the triflings of thy sportive fancy—
The sound half-uttered, by the air absorb'd—
The smile of joy check'd by returning gloom——
If motions—looks from your own soul conceal'd,
Have not escaped my notice—judge if I
Can err, when thou wouldst have me understand thee?

CARLOS.

Why this is boldly ventured: I accept
The wager, Princess. Then you undertake
To make discoveries in my secret heart,
Unknown e'en to myself.

PRINCESS (*displeased, but earnestly*).

Unknown to thee!
Reflect a moment, Prince! Nay, look around;
This boudoir's not the chamber of the Queen,
Where small deceits are practised with full licence.
You start, a sudden blush o'erspreads your face,
Who is so bold, so idle, you would ask,
As to watch Carlos, when he deems himself
From scrutiny secure? Who was it, then,
At the last palace ball, observed you leave
The Queen, your partner, standing in the dance,
And join, with eager haste, the neighb'ring couple,
To offer to the Princess Eboli
The hand, your royal partner should have claim'd?
An error, Prince, his Majesty himself,
Who just then entered the apartment, noticed.

CARLOS (*with ironical smile*).

His Majesty? And did he really so?
Of all men he should not have seen it!

PRINCESS.

No;
Nor yet that other scene, within the chapel,
Which doubtless Carlos hath long since forgotten.
Prostrate before the holy Virgin's image,
You lay in prayer, when suddenly you heard—
'Twas not your fault—a rustling from behind
Of ladies' dresses. Then did Philip's son,
A youth of hero courage, tremble like
A heretic before the Holy Office.
On his pale lips died the half-utter'd prayer.
In extacy of passion, Prince—the scene
Was truly touching—for you seized the hand,
The blessed Virgin's cold and holy hand,
And shower'd your burning kisses on the marble.

CARLOS.

Princess, you wrong me: that was pure devotion!

PRINCESS.

Indeed! that's quite another thing. Perhaps
It was the fear of losing, then, at cards,
When you were seated with the Queen and me,
And you with dexterous skill purloined my glove,
[CARLOS *starts surprised.*
That prompted you to play it for a card?

CARLOS.

What words are these? O Heav'n, what have I done?

PRINCESS.

Nothing, I hope, of which you need repent!
How pleasantly was I surprised to find
Conceal'd within the glove a little note,
Full of the warmest, tenderest romance.

CARLOS (*interrupting her suddenly*).

Mere poetry!—no more. My fancy teems
With idle bubbles oft, which break as soon
As they arise—and this was one of them;
So prithee let us talk of it no more.

PRINCESS (*leaving him with astonishment, and regarding him for some time at a distance*).

I am exhausted—all attempts are vain
To hold this youth. He still eludes my grasp.
[*Remains silent a few moments.*
But stay! Perchance 'tis man's unbounded pride,
That thus to add a zest to my delight
Assumes a mask of timid diffidence.
Tis so.
[*She approaches the* PRINCE *again, and looks at him doubtingly.*
Explain yourself, Prince, I entreat you.
For here I stand before a magic casket,
Which all my keys are powerless to unlock.

CARLOS.

As I before you stand.

PRINCESS (*leaves him suddenly, walks a few steps up and down in silence, apparently lost in deep thought.—After a pause. gravely and solemnly*).

Then thus at last—
I must resolve to speak, and Carlos, you
Shall be my judge. Yours is a noble nature,
You are a Prince—a Knight—a man of honour.
I throw myself upon your heart—protect me:
Or if I'm lost beyond redemption's power,
Give me your tears in pity for my fate.
[*The* PRINCE *draws nearer.*
A daring favourite of the King demands
My hand—his name Ruy Gomez, Count of Silva.
The King consents—the bargain has been struck,
And I am sold already to his creature.

CARLOS (*with evident emotion*).

Sold! you sold! Another bargain, then,
Concluded by this royal southern trader!

PRINCESS.

No: but hear all—'tis not enough that I
Am sacrificed to cold state policy,
A snare is laid to entrap my innocence.
Here is a letter will unmask the Saint!
[CARLOS *takes the paper, and without reading it listens with impatience to her recital.*

Where shall I find protection, Prince? Till now
My virtue was defended by my pride,
At length——

CARLOS.

At length you yielded.—Yielded? No,
For God's sake say not so!

PRINCESS.

Yielded!—to whom?
Poor piteous reasoning—Weak beyond contempt
Your haughty minds, who hold a woman's favour,
And love's pure joys, as wares to traffic for!
Love is the only treasure on the face
Of this wide earth, that knows no purchaser
Besides itself—love has no price but love.
It is the costly gem, beyond all price,
Which I must freely give away, or—bury
For ever unenjoyed—like that proud merchant
Whom not the wealth of all the rich Rialto
Could tempt—a great rebuke to kings!—to save
From the deep ocean waves his matchless pearl,
Too proud to barter it beneath its worth!

CARLOS (*aside*).

Now, by great Heaven, this woman's beautiful.

PRINCESS.

Call it caprice or pride, I ne'er will make
Division of my joys. To him, alone,
I choose as mine, I give up all for ever.
One only sacrifice I make; but that
Shall be eternal. One true heart alone
My love shall render happy; but that one
I'll elevate to God. The keen delight
Of mingling souls—the kiss—the swimming joys
Of that delicious hour when lovers meet,
The magic power of heavenly beauty—all
Are sister colours of a single ray—
Leaves of one single blossom. Shall I tear
One petal from this sweet, this lovely flower,
With reckless hand, and mar its beauteous chalice?
Shall I degrade the dignity of woman,
The masterpiece of the Almighty's hand,
To charm the evening of a reveller?

CARLOS.

Incredible! that in Madrid should dwell
This matchless creature! and unknown to me
Until this day.

PRINCESS.

Long since had I forsaken
This court—the world—and in some blest retreat
Immured myself; but one tie binds me still
Too firmly to existence. Perhaps—alas!
'Tis but a phantom—but 'tis dear to me.
I love—but am not loved in turn—

CARLOS (*full of ardour, going towards her*).

You are!
As true as God is throned in heaven! I swear
You are—you are unspeakably beloved—

PRINCESS.

You swear it, you!—sure 'twas an angel's voice.
O, if you swear it, Carlos, I'll believe it—
Then I am truly loved!

CARLOS (*embracing her with tenderness*).

Bewitching maid,
Thou creature worthy of idolatry!
I stand before thee now all eye, all ear,
All rapture and delight. What eye hath seen thee—
Under yon heaven what eye could e'er have seen thee,
And boast he never loved? What dost thou here
In Philip's royal court! Thou beauteous angel!
Here amid monks and all their priestly train.
This is no clime for such a lovely flower—
They fain would rifle all thy sweets—full well
I know their hearts. But it shall never be—
Not whilst I draw life's breath—I fold thee thus
Within my arms, and in these hands I'll bear thee
E'en through a hell replete with mocking fiends.
Let me thy guardian angel prove.

PRINCESS (*with a countenance full of love*).

O, Carlos!
How little have I known thee! and how richly
With measureless reward thy heart repays

The weighty task of—comprehending thee!
[*She takes his hand and is about to kiss it.*

CARLOS (*drawing it back*).
Princess! What mean you?

PRINCESS (*with tenderness and grace, looking at his hand attentively*).
O, this beauteous hand!
How lovely 'tis, and rich! This hand has yet
Two costly presents to bestow!—a crown—
And Carlos' heart:—and both these gifts perchance
Upon one mortal!—both on one—O great
And godlike gift—almost too much for one!
How if you share the treasure, Prince! A queen
Knows nought of love—and she who truly loves
Cares little for a crown! 'Twere better, Prince,
Then to divide the treasure—and at once—
What says my Prince? Have you done so already?
Have you in truth? And do I know the blest one?

CARLOS.
Thou shalt. I will unfold myself to thee,
To thy unspotted innocence, dear maid,
Thy pure unblemish'd nature. In this court
Thou art the worthiest—first—the only one
To whom this soul has stood reveal'd. Then, yes!
I will not now conceal it—Yes, I love!—

PRINCESS.
O cruel heart! Does this avowal prove
So painful to thee? Must I first deserve
Thy pity—ere I hope to win thy love?

CARLOS (*starting*).
What say'st thou?

PRINCESS.
So to trifle with me, Prince!
Indeed it was not well—and to deny
The key!

CARLOS.
The key! the key! Oh yes, 'tis so!
[*After a dead silence.*

I see it all too plainly! Gracious Heav'n!

[*His knees totter, he leans against a chair, and covers his face with his hands. A long silence on both sides. The* PRINCESS *screams and falls.*

PRINCESS.

Oh horrible! What have I done?

CARLOS.

Hurl'd down
So far from all my heavenly joys! 'Tis dreadful!

PRINCESS (*hiding her face in the cushion*).

O God! What have I said?

CARLOS (*kneeling before her*).

I am not guilty.
My passion—an unfortunate mistake—
By heaven, I am not guilty——

PRINCESS (*pushing him from her*).

Out of my sight,
For Heav'n's sake!

CARLOS.

No, I will not leave thee thus.
In this dread anguish leave thee——

PRINCESS (*pushing him forcibly away*).

O in pity—
For mercy s sake, away—out of my sight!
Wouldst thou destroy me? How I hate thy presence!

[CARLOS *going.*

Give, give me back the letter and the key.—
Where is the other letter?

CARLOS.

The other letter?
What other?

PRINCESS.

That from the King, to me——

CARLOS (*terrified*).

From whom?

PRINCESS.

The one I just now gave you.

CARLOS.

From the King!

To you!

PRINCESS.

O heavens, how dreadfully have I
Involved myself! The letter, Sir! I must
Have it again.

CARLOS.

The letter from the King!

To you!

PRINCESS.

The letter! give it, I implore you
By all that's sacred—give it—

CARLOS.

What, the letter
That will unmask the saint!—Is this the letter?

PRINCESS.

Now I'm undone! Quick, give it me——

CARLOS.

The letter——

PRINCESS (*wringing her hands in despair*).

What have I done?—O dreadful, dire imprudence!

CARLOS.

This letter comes then from the King! Princess,
That changes all indeed, and quickly too.
This letter is beyond all value—priceless!
All Philip's crowns are worthless and too poor
To win it from my hands. I'll keep this letter.

PRINCESS (*throwing herself prostrate before him as he is going*).

Almighty Heaven! then I am lost for ever! [*Exit* CARLOS.

SCENE IX.

The PRINCESS *alone.*

(*She seems overcome with surprise and is confounded. After* CARLOS' *departure she hastens to call him back.*)

PRINCESS.

Prince, but one word! Prince, hear me. He is gone.
And this, too, I am doom'd to bear—his scorn!

And I am left in lonely wretchedness,
Rejected and despised!
[*Sinks down upon a chair.—After a pause*
And yet not so—
I'm but displaced—supplanted by some wanton.
He loves! of that, no longer doubt is left:
He has himself confess'd it—but my rival—
Who can she be? Happy, thrice happy one!
This much stands clear—he loves, where he should not!
He dreads discovery—and from the King
He hides his guilty passion! Why from him
Who would so gladly hail it? Or, is it not
The father that he dreads so in the parent?—
When the King's wanton purpose was disclosed
His features glow'd with triumph—boundless joy
Flash'd in his eyes—his rigid virtue fled—
Why was it mute in such a cause as this?
Why should he triumph? What hath he to gain
If Philip to his queen——
[*She stops suddenly, as if struck by a thought, then drawing the ribbon hastily from her bosom which she had taken from* CARLOS, *she seems to recognise it.*
Fool that I am!—
At length 'tis plain. Where have my senses been?
My eyes are opened now. They loved each other
Long before Philip wooed her, and the Prince
Ne'er saw me but with her! She, she alone
Was in his thoughts when I believed myself
The object of his true and boundless love.
O matchless error!—and have I betray'd
My weakness to her? [*Pauses.*
Should his love prove hopeless?
Who can believe it? Would a hopeless love
Persist in such a struggle? Call'd to revel
In joys for which a monarch sighs in vain!
A hopeless love makes no such sacrifice.
What fire was in his kiss! How tenderly
He press'd my bosom to his beating heart!
Well nigh the trial had proved dangerous
To his romantic, unrequited passion!

With joy he seized the key he fondly thought
The Queen had sent:—in this gigantic stride
Of love he puts full credence—and he comes—
In very truth comes here—and so imputes
To Philip's wife, a deed so madly rash.
And would he so, had love not made him bold?
'Tis clear as day—his suit is heard—she loves!
By Heaven, this saintly creature burns with passion.
How subtle too she is! With fear I trembled
Before this lofty paragon of virtue!
She tower'd beside me, an exalted being,
And in her beams I felt myself eclipsed;
I envied her the lovely, cloudless calm,
That kept her soul from earthly tumults free.
And was this soft serenity but show?
Would she at both feasts revel, holding up
Her virtue's godlike splendour to our gaze,
And riot in the secret joys of vice?
And shall the false dissembler cozen thus,
And win a safe immunity from this——
That no avenger comes? By heaven she shall not!
I once adored her,—that demands revenge:—
The King shall know her treachery—the King!
[*After a pause.*
'Tis the sure way to win the Monarch's ear! [*Exit.*

Scene X.

A Chamber in the Royal Palace.

Duke of Alva, Father Domingo.

DOMINGO

Something to tell me?

ALVA.

Ay! a thing of moment,
Of which I've made discovery to-day,
And I would have your judgment on it.

DOMINGO.

How!
Discovery! To what do you allude?

ALVA.

Prince Carlos and myself this morning met
In the Queen's antechamber. I received

An insult from him—we were both in heat—
The strife grew loud—and we had drawn our swords.
Alarm'd, from her apartment rush'd the Queen.
She stepped between us,—with commanding eye
Of conscious power, she looked upon the Prince.
'Twas but a single glance,—but his arm dropp'd.
He fell upon my bosom—gave me then
A warm embrace, and vanish'd.

DOMINGO (*after a pause*).

This seems strange!
It brings a something to my mind, my Lord!
And thoughts like these I own have often sprung
Within my breast; but I avoid such fancies—
To no one have I e'er confided them.
There are such things as double-edged swords
And untrue friends:—I fear them both. 'Tis hard
To judge among mankind, but still more hard
To know them thoroughly. Words slipt at random
Are confidants offended—therefore I
Buried my secret in my breast, till time
Should drag it forth to light. 'Tis dangerous
To render certain services to kings.
They are the bolts, which, if they miss the mark,
Recoil upon the archer! I could swear
Upon the Sacrament to what I saw.
Yet one eye-witness—one word overheard—
A scrap of paper—would weigh heavier far
Than my most strong conviction! Cursed fate
That we are here in Spain!

ALVA.

And why in Spain?

DOMINGO.

There is a chance in every Court but this,
For passion to forget itself, and fall.
Here it is warn'd by ever-wakeful laws.
Our Spanish Queens would find it hard to sin—
And *only there* do they meet obstacles,
Where best 'twould serve our purpose to surprise them.

ALVA

But listen farther: Carlos had to-day

An audience of the King; the interview
Lasted an hour, and earnestly he sought
The Government of Flanders for himself.
Loudly he begg'd, and fervently. I heard him
In the adjoining cabinet. His eyes
Were red with tears when I encountered him.
At noon he wore a look of lofty triumph,
And vow'd his joy at the King's choice of me.
He thank'd the King. "Matters are changed," he said,
"And things go better now." He's no dissembler:
How shall I reconcile such contradictions?
The Prince exults to see himself rejected,
And I receive a favour from the King
With marks of anger!—What must I believe?
In truth, this new-born dignity doth sound
Much more like banishment, than royal favour!

DOMINGO.

And is it come to this at last? to this?
And has one moment crumbled into dust
What cost us years to build? And you so calm,
So perfectly at ease!——Know you this youth?
Do you foresee the fate we may expect
Should he attain to power? The Prince! No foe
Am I of his. Far other cares than these
Gnaw at my rest—cares for the throne—for God,
And for His holy Church!—The royal Prince—
(I know him, I can penetrate his soul,)
Has formed a horrible design, Toledo!
The wild design—to make himself the Regent,
And set aside our pure and sacred faith.
His bosom glows with some new-fangled virtue,
Which, proud and self-sufficient, scorns to rest
For strength on any creed. He dares to *think!*
His brain is all on fire, with wild chimeras—
He reverences the people! And is this
A man to be our King?

ALVA.

Fantastic dreams!
No more. A boy's ambition, too, perchance
To play some lofty part! What can he less?
These thoughts will vanish when he's call'd to rule.

DOMINGO.

I doubt it! Of his freedom he is proud,
And scorns those strict restraints, all men must bear
Who hope to govern others. Would he suit
Our throne? His bold gigantic mind
Would burst the barriers of our policy.
In vain I sought to enervate his soul
In the loose joys of this voluptuous age,
He stood the trial. Fearful is the spirit
That rules this youth; and Philip soon will see
His sixtieth year.

ALVA.

Your vision stretches far!

DOMINGO.

He and the Queen are both alike in this.
Already works, conceal'd in either breast,
The poisonous wish for change and innovation.
Give it but way, 'twill quickly reach the throne
I know this Valois! We may tremble for
The secret vengeance of this quiet foe,
If Philip's weakness hearken to her voice!
Fortune so far hath smiled upon us. Now
We must anticipate the foe—and both
Shall fall together in one fatal snare.
Let but a hint of such a thing be dropp'd
Before the King, proved or unproved, it recks not;
Our point is gain'd if he but waver. We
Ourselves have not a doubt; and once convinced,
'Tis easy to convince another's mind.
Be sure we shall discover more, if we
Start with the faith that more remains conceal'd.

ALVA.

But soft! A vital question! Who is he
Will undertake the task to tell the King?

DOMINGO.

Nor you, nor I! Now shall you learn, what long
My busy spirit, full of its design,
Has been at work with, to achieve its ends.
Still is there wanting to complete our league,
A third important personage. The King

Loves the young Princess Eboli—and I
Foster this passion, for my own designs.
I am his go-between. She shall be school'd
Into our plot. If my plan fail me not,
In this young lady, shall a close ally—
A very Queen, bloom for us. She herself
Asked me, but now, to meet her in this chamber.
I'm full of hope. And in one little night
A Spanish maid may blast this Valois' lily.

ALVA.

What do you say! Can I have heard aright?
By Heaven! I'm all amazement. Compass this,
And I'll bow down to thee, Dominican!
The day's our own.

DOMINGO.

Soft! Some one comes: 'tis she—
'Tis she herself!

ALVA.

I'm in the adjoining room
If you should——

DOMINGO.

Be it so: I'll call you in. [*Exit* ALVA.

SCENE XI.

PRINCESS, DOMINGO.

DOMINGO.

At your command, Princess.

PRINCESS

We are perhaps
Not quite alone? [*Looking inquisitively after the* DUKE.
You have, as I observe,
A witness still by you.

DOMINGO.

How?

PRINCESS.

Who was he
That left your side but now?

DOMINGO.

It was Duke Alva,
Most gracious Princess, he requests you will
Admit him to an audience after me.

PRINCESS.

Duke Alva! How? What can he want with me?
You can, perhaps, inform me?

DOMINGO.

I?—and that
Before I learn to what important chance
I owe the favour, long denied, to stand
Before the Princess Eboli once more?

[*Pauses awaiting her answer.*

Has any circumstance occurr'd at last
To favour the King's wishes? Have my hopes
Been not in vain, that more deliberate thought
Would reconcile you to an offer, which
Caprice alone and waywardness could spurn?
I seek your presence full of expectation——

PRINCESS.

Was my last answer to the King convey'd?

DOMINGO.

I have delay'd to inflict this mortal wound.
There still is time, it rests with you,
Princess, to mitigate its rigour.

PRINCESS.

Tell the King
That I expect him.

DOMINGO.

May I, lovely Princess,
Indeed accept this as your true reply?

PRINCESS.

I do not jest.—By Heaven, you make me tremble!
What have I done to make e'en you grow pale?

DOMINGO.

Nay, Lady, this surprise—so sudden—I
Can scarcely comprehend it.

PRINCESS.

Reverend Sir!
You shall not comprehend it.—Not for all
The world would I you comprehended it.
Enough for you it is so—spare yourself
The trouble to investigate in thought,
Whose eloquence hath wrought this wondrous change.
But for your comfort let me add, you have

No hand in this misdeed,—nor has the Church.
Although you've proved, that cases might arise
Wherein the Church, to gain some noble end,
Might use the persons of her youthful daughters!
Such reasonings move not me: such motives, pure,
Right reverend Sir, are far too high for me.

DOMINGO.

When they become superfluous, your Grace,
I willingly retract them.

PRINCESS.

Seek the King,
And ask him as from me, that he will not
Mistake me in this business. What I have been,
That am I still. 'Tis but the course of things
Has changed. When I in anger spurn'd his suit,
I deem'd him truly happy in possessing
Earth's fairest Queen.—I thought his faithful wife
Deserved my sacrifice.—I thought so then,
But now I'm undeceived.

DOMINGO.

Princess, go on!
I hear it all—we understand each other.

PRINCESS.

Enough. She is found out. I will not spare her.
The hypocrite's unmask'd! She has deceived
The King, all Spain, and me. She loves, I know
She loves! I can bring proofs, will make you tremble.
The King has been deceived—but he shall not,
By Heaven, go unrevenged! The saintly mask
Of pure and superhuman self-denial
I'll tear from her deceitful brow, that all
May see the forehead of the shameless sinner.
'Twill cost me dear, but here my triumph lies,
That it will cost her infinitely more.

DOMINGO.

Now all is ripe, let me call in the Duke. [*Goes out.*

PRINCESS (*astonished*)

What means all this?

Scene XII.

The Princess, Duke Alva, Domingo

DOMINGO (*leading the* DUKE *in*).
Our tidings, good my Lord,
Come somewhat late. The Princess Eboli
Reveals to us a secret, we had meant
Ourselves to impart to her.

ALVA.
My visit, then,
Will not so much surprise her, but I never
Trust my own eyes in these discoveries.
They need a woman's more discerning glance

PRINCESS.
Discoveries! How mean you?

DOMINGO.
Would we knew
What place and fitter season you——

PRINCESS.
Just so!
To-morrow noon, I will expect you both.
Reasons I have, why this clandestine guilt
Should from the King no longer be conceal'd.

ALVA
Tis this that brings us here. The King must know it
And he should hear the news from you, Princess,
From you alone:—for to what tongue would he
Afford such ready credence, as to yours,
Friend and companion ever of his spouse?

DOMINGO.
As yours, who more than any one, at will
Can o'er him exercise supreme command

ALVA.
I am the Prince's open enemy

DOMINGO
And that is what the world believes of me.
The Princess Eboli 's above suspicion
We are compell'd to silence, but your duty,
The duty of your office, calls on you
To speak. The King shall not escape our hands.
Let your hints rouse him, we'll complete the work

ALVA.

It must be done at once, without delay;
Each moment now is precious. In an hour
The order may arrive for my departure.

DOMINGO (*after a short pause, turns to the* PRINCESS).

Cannot some letters be discover'd? Truly,
An intercepted letter from the Prince
Would work with rare effect. Ay! let me see—
Is it not so? You sleep, Princess, I think,
In the same chamber with her Majesty?

PRINCESS.

The next to hers. But of what use is that?

DOMINGO.

Oh for some skill in locks! Have you observed
Where she is wont to keep her casket key?

PRINCESS (*in thought*).

Yes! that might lead to something—yes, I think
The key is to be found.

DOMINGO.

Letters, you know,
Need messengers. Her retinue is large—
Who do you think could put us on the scent?
Gold can do much.

ALVA.

Can no one tell us whether
The Prince has any trusty confidant?

DOMINGO.

Not one; in all Madrid not one.

ALVA.

That's strange!

DOMINGO.

Rely on me in this. He holds in scorn
The universal court. I have my proofs.

ALVA.

Stay! It occurs to me—as I was leaving
The Queen's apartment, I beheld the Prince
In private conference with a page of hers.

PRINCESS (*suddenly interrupting*).

Oh, no! that must have been of something else.

DOMINGO.

Could we not ascertain the fact? It seems
Suspicious. [*To the* DUKE.
Did you know the page, my Lord?

PRINCESS.

Some trifle—what else could it be? Enough—
I'm sure of that. So we shall meet again
Before I see the King; and by that time
We may discover much.

DOMINGO (*leading her aside*).

What of the King?
Say may he hope? May I assure him so?
And the entrancing hour which shall fulfil
His fond desires, what shall I say of that?

PRINCESS.

In a few days I will feign sickness, and
Shall be excused from waiting on the Queen.
Such is, you know, the custom of the Court,
And I may then remain in my apartment.

DOMINGO.

Tis well devised! Now the great game is won,
And we may bid defiance to all Queens!

PRINCESS.

Hark, I am called. I must attend the Queen,
So fare you well. [*Exit.*

SCENE XIII.

ALVA *and* DOMINGO.

DOMINGO (*after a pause, during which he has watched the* PRINCESS).

My Lord! these roses, and——
Your battles—

ALVA.

And your God—why even so!
Thus we'll await the lightning that shall scathe us!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE XIV.

A Carthusian Convent.

DON CARLOS *and the* PRIOR.

CARLOS (*to the* PRIOR, *as he comes in*).

Been here already?—I am sorry for it.

PRIOR.

Yes, thrice since morning. 'Tis about an hour
Since he went hence.

CARLOS.

But he will sure return.
Has he not left some message?

PRIOR.

Yes; he promised
To come again at noon.

CARLOS (*going to a window, and looking round the country*)

Your convent lies
Far from the public road. Yonder are seen
The turrets of Madrid—just so—and there
The Mansanares flows. The scenery is
Exactly to my wish, and all around
Is calm and still as secrecy itself.

PRIOR.

Or as the entrance to another world!

CARLOS.

Most worthy Sir, to your fidelity
And honour, have I now entrusted all
I hold most dear and sacred in the world.
No mortal man must know, or e'en suspect,
With whom I here hold secret assignation.
Most weighty reasons prompt me to deny,
To all the world, the friend whom I expect,
Therefore I choose this convent.—Are we safe
From traitors and surprise? You recollect
What you have sworn.

PRIOR.

Good Sir, rely on us.
A King's suspicion cannot pierce the grave,
And curious ears haunt only those resorts
Where wealth and passions dwell—but from these walls
The world's for ever banish'd.

CARLOS.

You may think,
Perhaps, beneath this seeming fear and caution
There lies a guilty conscience?

PRIOR.

I think nothing.

CARLOS.

If you imagine this, most holy father,
You err—indeed you err. My secret shuns
The sight of man—but not the eye of God.

PRIOR.

Such things concern us little. This retreat
To guilt, and innocence alike, is open.
And whether thy designs be good or ill,
Thy purpose criminal or virtuous,—that
We leave to thee to settle with thy heart.

CARLOS (*with warmth*).

Our purpose never can disgrace your God.
'Tis his own noblest work. To you, indeed,
I may reveal it.

PRIOR.

To what end, I pray?
Forego, dear Prince, this needless explanation.
The world and all its troubles have been long
Shut from my thoughts—in preparation for
My last long journey. Why recall them to me,
For the brief space that must precede my death?
'Tis little for salvation that we need—
But the bell rings, and summons me to prayer.

[*Exit* PRIOR.

SCENE XV.

DON CARLOS; *the* MARQUIS POSA *enters.*

CARLOS.

At length once more,—at length——

MARQUIS.

O, what a trial
For the impatience of a friend! The sun
Has risen twice—twice set—since Carlos's fate
Has been resolved, and am I only now
To learn it: speak,—you're reconciled!——

CARLOS.

With whom?

MARQUIS.

The King! And Flanders, too,—its fate is settled!

CARLOS.

The Duke sets out to-morrow. That is fixed——

MARQUIS.

That cannot be—it is not surely so.
Can all Madrid be so deceived? 'Tis said
You had a private audience, and the King——

CARLOS.

Remain'd inflexible, and we are now
Divided more than ever.

MARQUIS.

Do you go
To Flanders!

CARLOS.

No!

MARQUIS.

Alas! my blighted hopes!

CARLOS.

Of this hereafter. Oh, Roderigo! since
We parted last, what have I not endured?
But first thy counsel! I must speak with her!

MARQUIS.

Your mother? No! But wherefore?

CARLOS.

I have hopes—
But you turn pale! Be calm—I should be happy.
And I shall be so: but of this anon—
Advise me now, how I may speak with her.

MARQUIS.

What mean you? What new feverish dream is this?

CARLOS.

By the great God of wonders 'tis no dream!
'Tis truth, reality——

[*Taking out the* KING'S *letter to the* PRINCESS EBOLI.

Contain'd in this
Important paper—Yes, the Queen is free,—
Free before men and in the eyes of Heaven;
There read, and cease to wonder at my words.

(MARQUIS (*opening the letter*).

What do I here behold? The King's own hand!

[*After he has read it.*

To whom address'd?

CARLOS.

To Princess Eboli.

Two days ago, a page who serves the Queen,
Brought me, from unknown hands, a key and letter,
Which said that in the left wing of the palace,
Where the Queen lodges, lay a cabinet,—
That there a lady whom I long had loved
Awaited me. I straight obey'd the summons

MARQUIS.

Fool! madman! you obey'd it——

CARLOS.

Not that I
The writing knew; but there was only one
Such woman, who could think herself adored
By Carlos. With delight intoxicate
I hasten'd to the spot. A heavenly song,
Re-echoing from the innermost apartment,
Served me for guide. I reached the cabinet—
I entered and beheld—conceive my wonder!—

MARQUIS.

I guess it all——

CARLOS.

I had been lost for ever,
But that I fell into an angel's hands!
She, hapless chance, by my imprudent looks
Deceived, had yielded to the sweet delusion,
And deem'd herself the idol of my soul.
Moved by the silent anguish of my breast,
With thoughtless generosity, her heart
Nobly determined to return my love;
Deeming respectful fear had caused my silence,
She dared to speak, and all her lovely soul
Laid bare before me.

MARQUIS.

And with calm composure,
You tell this tale! The Princess Eboli
Saw through your heart; and doubtless she has pierced
The inmost secret of your hidden love.
You've wrong'd her deeply, and she rules the King.

CARLOS (*confidently*).

But she is virtuous!

MARQUIS.

She may be so
From Love's mere selfishness. But much I fear
Such virtue—well I know it: know how little
It hath the power to soar to that *ideal*,
Which, first conceived in sweet and stately grace,
From the pure soul's maternal soil, puts forth
Spontaneous shoots, nor asks the gard'ner's aid
To nurse its lavish blossoms into life.
'Tis but a foreign plant, with labour rear'd,
And warmth that poorly imitates the south,
In a cold soil and an unfriendly clime.
Call it what name you will—or education,
Or principle, or artificial virtue——
Won from the heat of youth by art and cunning,
In conflicts manifold—all noted down
With scrupulous reckoning to that Heaven's account,
Which is its aim, and will requite its pains.
Ask your own heart! Can she forgive the Queen
That you should scorn her dearly-purchased virtue,
To pine in hopeless love for Philip's wife.

CARLOS.

Know'st thou the Princess, then, so well?

MARQUIS.

Not I—
I've scarcely seen her twice. And yet thus much
I may remark. To me she still appears
To shun alone the nakedness of vice,
Too weakly proud of her imagined virtue.
And then I mark the Queen! How different, Carlos,
Is everything that I behold in her!
In native dignity, serene and calm,
Wearing a careless cheerfulness—unschool'd
In all the train'd restraints of conduct, far
Removed from boldness and timidity,
With firm heroic step, she walks along
The narrow middle path of rectitude,
Unconscious of the worship she compels,
Where she of self-approval never dream'd

Say, does my Carlos in this mirror trace
The features of his Eboli? The Princess
Was constant while she loved; love was the price,
The understood condition of her virtue.
You fail'd to pay that price—'twill therefore fall.

CARLOS (*with warmth*).

No, no! [*Hastily pacing the Apartment.*
I tell thee, no! And Roderigo,
Ill it becomes thee, thus to rob thy Carlos
Of his high trust in human excellence,
His chief, his dearest joy!

MARQUIS.

Deserve I this?
Friend of my soul, this would I never do—
By Heaven I would not! O this Eboli!
She were an angel to me, and before
Her glory would I bend me prostrate down,
In reverence deep as thine, if she were not
The mistress of thy secret.

CARLOS.

See how vain,
How idle are thy fears! What proofs has she
That will not stamp her maiden brow with shame?
Say will she purchase with her own dishonour
The wretched satisfaction of revenge?

MARQUIS.

Ay! to recall a blush, full many a one
Has doom'd herself to infamy.

CARLOS (*with increased vehemence*)

Nay, that
Is far too harsh—and cruel! She is proud
And noble; well I know her, and fear nothing
Vain are your efforts to alarm my hopes.
I must speak to my mother.

MARQUIS.

Now? for what?

CARLOS.

Because I've nothing more to care for now,
And I must know my fate. Only contrive
That I may speak with her.

MARQUIS.

And wilt thou show
This letter to her?

CARLOS.

Question me no more,
But quickly find the means that I may see her

MARQUIS (*significantly*).

Didst thou not tell me that thou lov'st thy mother?
And wouldst thou really show this letter to her?

[CARLOS *fixes his eyes on the ground, and remains silent.*

I read a something, Carlos, in thy looks
Unknown to me before. Thou turn'st thine eyes
Away from me.—Then is it true, and have I
Judged thee aright? Here, let me see that paper.

[CARLOS *gives him the letter, and the* MARQUIS *tears it.*

CARLOS.

What! art thou mad? [*Moderating his warmth*
In truth—I must confess it,—
That letter was of deepest moment to me.

MARQUIS.

So it appear'd: on that account I tore it.

[*The* MARQUIS *casts a penetrating look on the* PRINCE, *who surveys him with doubt and surprise.—A long silence.*

Now speak to me with candour, Carlos. What
Have desecrations of the royal bed
To do with thee—thy love? Dost thou fear Philip?
How are a husband's violated duties
Allied with thee and thy audacious hopes?
Has he sinn'd there, where thou hast placed thy love?
Now then, in truth, I learn to comprehend thee—
How ill till now I've understood thy love!

CARLOS.

What dost thou think, Roderigo?

MARQUIS.

Oh, I feel
From what it is that I must wean myself.
Once it was otherwise!—Yes, once thy soul
Was bounteous, rich, and warm, and there was room
For a whole world in thy expanded heart.
Those feelings are extinct—all swallow'd up
In one poor petty, selfish passion. Now
Thy heart is wither'd, dead! No tears hast thou

For the unhappy fate of wretched Flanders—
No, not another tear. O, Carlos! see
How poor, how beggarly, thou hast become,
Since all thy love has centered in thyself!

CARLOS (*flings himself into a chair.—After a pause, with scarcely suppressed tears,*)

Too well I know thou lov'st me now no more!

MARQUIS.

Not so, my Carlos. Well I understand
This fiery passion: 'tis the misdirection
Of feelings pure and noble in themselves.
The Queen belong'd to thee: the King, thy father,
Despoil'd thee of her—yet till now thou hast
Been modestly distrustful of thy claims.
Philip, perhaps, was worthy of her! Thou
Scarce dared to breathe his sentence in a whisper
This letter has resolved thy doubts, and proved
Thou art the worthier man. With haughty joy
Thou saw'st before thee rise the doom that waits
On tyranny convicted of a theft,
But thou wert proud to be the injured one:
Wrongs undeserv'd great souls can calmly suffer
Yet here thy fancy played thee false: thy pride
Was touch'd with satisfaction, and thy heart
Allow'd itself to hope: I plainly saw
This time, at least, thou didst not know thyself

CARLOS (*with emotion*).

Thou'rt wrong, Roderigo; for my thoughts were far
Less noble than thy goodness would persuade me

MARQUIS.

And am I then e'en here so little known?
See, Carlos, when thou errest, 'tis my way,
Amid a hundred virtues, still to find
That *one* to which I may impute thy fall.
Now, then, we understand each other better,
And thou shalt have an audience of the Queen.

CARLOS (*falling on his neck*).

O, how I blush beside thee!

MARQUIS.

Take my word,
And leave the rest to me. A wild, bold thought,
A happy thought is dawning in my mind;

And thou shalt hear it from a fairer mouth,
I hasten to the Queen. Perhaps to-morrow
Thy wish may be achieved. Till then, my Carlos,
Forget not this—"That a design conceived
Of lofty reason, which involves the fate,
The suff rings of mankind, tho' it be baffled
Ten thousand times, should never be abandoned."
Dost hear?—Remember Flanders.

CARLOS.

Yes! all, all
That thou and virtue bid me not forget.

MARQUIS (*going to a window*).

The time is up—I hear thy suite approaching.

[*They embrace.*

Crown Prince again, and vassal.

CARLOS.

Dost thou go
Straight to Madrid?

MARQUIS.

Yes, straight.

CARLOS.

Hold! one word more.
How nearly it escaped me! Yet 'twas news
Of deep importance. "Every letter now
Sent to Brabant is opened by the King!"
So be upon thy guard. The royal post
Has secret orders.

MARQUIS.

How have you learnt this?

CARLOS.

Don Raymond Taxis is my trusty friend.

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

Well!—then they may be sent through Germany.

[*Exeunt on different sides.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The King's Bedchamber.

On the toilet two burning lights. In the back-ground several Pages asleep resting on their knees. The KING, *in half undress, stands before the table, with one arm bent over*

the chair, in a reflecting posture. Before him is a medallion and papers.

KING.

Of a warm fancy she has ever been!
Who can deny it? I could never love her,
Yet has she never seem'd to miss my love.
And so 'tis plain—she's false!
[*Makes a movement which brings him to himself.—He looks round with surprise.*] Where have I been?
Is no one watching here, then, save the King?
The light's burnt out, and yet it is not day.
I must forego my slumbers for to-night.
Take it, kind nature, for enjoy'd! No time
Have monarchs to retrieve the nights they lose.
I'm now awake, and day it shall be.——
[*He puts out the candles, and draws aside the window-curtain. He observes the sleeping Pages—remains for some time standing before them—then rings a bell.*
All
Asleep within the antechamber too?

SCENE II.

The KING, COUNT LERMA.

LERMA (*surprised at seeing the* KING).

Does not your Majesty feel well?

KING.

The left
Pavilion of the palace was in flames:
Did you not hear the alarum?

LERMA.

No, my Liege

KING.

No! What? And did I only dream it then?
'Twas surely real! Does not the Queen sleep there?

LERMA.

Yes, your Majesty.

KING.

This dream affrights me!
In future let the guards be doubled there
As soon as it grows dark. Dost hear? And yet
Let it be done in secret.—I would not——
Why do you gaze on me?——

LERMA.

Your blood-shot eyes
I mark, that beg repose. Dare I remind
My Liege of an inestimable life,
And of your subjects, who with pale dismay,
Would in such features read of restless nights?
But two brief hours of morning sleep would——

KING (*with troubled look*).

Sleep!
Shall I find sleep within the Escurial:—
Let the King sleep, and he may lose his crown.
The husband, his wife's heart. But no! not so—
This is but slander. Was it not a woman
Whisper'd the crime to me? Woman, thy name
Is calumny!—The deed I'll hold unprov'd,
Until a man confirms the fatal truth!
[*To the Pages, who in the meanwhile have awaked.*
Summon Duke Alva! [*Pages go*
Count! come nearer to me.
[*Fixes a searching look on the* COUNT.
Is all this true? O! for Omniscience now,
Tho' but so long as a man's pulse might beat!
Is it true? Upon your oath! Am I deceived?

LERMA.

My great, my best of Kings!

KING (*drawing back*).

King! Nought but King!
And King again! No better answer than
Mere hollow echo! When I strike this rock,
For water, to assuage my burning thirst,
It gives me molten gold.

LERMA.

What true, my Liege?

KING.

O! nothing—nothing! Leave me! Get thee gone!
[*The* COUNT *going, the* KING *calls him back again.*
Say, are you married? and are you a father?

LERMA.

I am, your Majesty.

KING.

What! married—yet

You dare to watch a night here with your King!
Your hair is grey, and yet you do not blush
To think your wife is honest. Get thee home,
You'll find her lock'd, this moment, in your son's
Incestuous embrace. Believe your King.
Now go—you stand amazed—you stare at me
With searching eye, because of my grey hairs!
Unhappy man, reflect. Queens never taint
Their virtue thus:—doubt it, and you shall die!

LERMA (*with warmth*).

Who dare do so? In all my Monarch's realms
Who has the daring hardihood to breathe
Suspicion on her angel purity?
To slander thus, the best of Queens—

KING.

The best!
The best, from you too! She has ardent friends,
I find, around. It must have cost her much—
More than methinks she could afford to give.
You are dismiss'd—Now send the Duke to me

LERMA.

I hear him in the antechamber. [*Going.*

KING (*with a milder tone*).

Count
What you observed is very true.—My head
Burns with the fever of this sleepless night!
What I have utter'd in this waking dream,
Mark you!—forget! I am your gracious King!

[*Presents his hand to kiss. Exit* LERMA, *opening the door at the same time to* DUKE ALVA.

SCENE III.

The KING *and* DUKE ALVA.

ALVA (*approaching the* KING *with an air of doubt*).

This unexpected order, at so strange
An hour! [*Starts on looking closer at the* KING.
And then those looks!

KING (*has seated himself, and taken hold of the medallion on the table—Looks at the* DUKE *for some time in silence*).

And is it true

I have no faithful servant!

ALVA.

How?

KING.

A blow
Aim'd at my life in its most vital part!
Full well 'twas known, yet no one warn'd me of it.

ALVA (*with a look of astonishment*).

A blow aim'd at your Majesty! and yet
Escape your Alva's eye?

KING (*showing him letters*).

Know you this writing?

ALVA.

It is the Prince's hand.

KING (*a pause—watches the* DUKE *closely*).

Do you suspect
Then nothing?—Often have you caution'd me
'Gainst his ambition—Was there nothing more
Than his ambition should have made me tremble?

ALVA.

Ambition is a word of largest import,
And much it may comprise.

KING.

And had you nought
Of special purport to disclose?

ALVA (*after a pause, mysteriously*).

Your Majesty
Hath given the kingdom's welfare to my charge:—
On this my inmost, secret thoughts are bent,
And my best vigilance. Beyond this charge
What I may think, suspect, or know, belongs
To me alone. These are the sacred treasures
Which not the vassal only, but the slave—
The very slave—may from a king withhold.
Not all that to my mind seems plain, is yet
Mature enough to meet the Monarch's ear.
Would he be answered—then must I implore
He will not question as a King.

KING (*handing the letters*).

Read these!

ALVA (*reads them, and turns to the* KING *with a look of terror*).

Who was the madman placed these fatal papers
In my King's hands?

KING.

You know, then, who is meant?
No name you see is mentioned in the paper.

ALVA (*stepping back confused*).

I was too hasty!

KING.

But you know!

ALVA (*after some consideration*).

'Tis spoken!
The King commands,—I dare not now conceal.
I'll not deny it—I *do* know the person.

KING (*starting up in violent emotion*).

God of Revenge! inspire me to invent
Some new, unheard-of torture! Is their crime
So clear, so plain, so public to the world,
That without e'en the trouble of inquiry
The veriest hint suffices to reveal it?
This is too much! I did not dream of this!
I am the last of all, then, to discern it—
The last in all my realm?

ALVA (*throwing himself at the* KING'S *feet*).

Yes, I confess
My guilt, most gracious Monarch. I'm ashamed
A coward prudence should have tied my tongue
When truth, and justice, and my Sovereign's honour,
Urged me to speak. But since all else are silent,
And since the magic spell of beauty binds
All other tongues,—I dare to give it voice;
Though well I know, a son's warm protestations,
A wife's seductive charms and winning tears——

KING (*suddenly with warmth*).

Rise, Alva! thou hast now my royal promise—
Rise, and speak fearlessly!

ALVA (*rising*).

Your Majesty,
Perchance, may bear in your remembrance still,
What happen'd in the garden at Aranjuez.

You found the Queen deserted by her ladies,
With looks confused—alone, within a bower,——

KING.

Proceed! What further have I yet to hear?—

ALVA.

The Marchioness of Mondecar was banished
Because she boldly sacrificed herself
To save the Queen! It has been since discovered,
She did no more than she had been commanded.
——Prince Carlos, had been there.

KING (*starting*).

The Prince! What more?

ALVA.

Upon the ground, the footsteps of a man
Were traced, till finally they disappeared
Close to a grotto, leftward of the bower,
Where lay a handkerchief, the Prince had dropped.
This waken'd our suspicions.—But besides,
The gardener met the Prince upon the spot,—
Just at the time, as near as we can guess,
Your Majesty appeared within the walk.

KING (*recovering from gloomy thought*).

And yet she wept when I but seem'd to doubt!
She made me blush before th' assembled court,
Blush to my very self! By Heaven! I stood
In presence of her virtue, like a culprit.
[*A long and deep silence.—He sits down and hides his face.*
Yes, Alva, you are right!—All this may lead
To something dreadful—Leave me for a moment——

ALVA.

But, gracious sire, all this is not enough——

KING (*snatching up the papers*).

Nor this, nor this?—Nor all the harmony
Of these most damning proofs? 'Tis clear as day—
I knew it long ago—their heinous guilt
Began, when first I took her from your hands,
Here in Madrid. I think I see her now
With look of horror, pale as midnight ghost,
Fixing her eyes upon my hoary hair!
'Twas then the treacherous game began!

ALVA.

The Prince,
In welcoming a mother—lost his bride!
Long had they nursed a mutual passion, long
Each others ardent feelings understood,
Which her new state forbade her to indulge.
The fear which still attends love's first avowal
Was long subdued. Seduction, bolder grown,
Spoke in those forms of easy confidence
Which recollections of the past allowed.
Allied by harmony of souls and years,
And now by similar restraints provoked,
They readily obey'd their wild desires.
Reasons of state opposed their early union—
But can it, sire, be thought she ever gave
To the State Council such authority?
That she subdued the passion of her soul
To scrutinize with more attentive eye
Th' election of the cabinet. Her heart
Was bent on love, and won a diadem.

KING (*offended, and with bitterness*)

You are a nice observer, Duke, and I
Admire your eloquence. I thank you truly.
[*Rising coldly and haughtily*
But you are right. The Queen has deeply err'd,
In keeping from me letters of such import,
And in concealing the intrusive visit
The Prince paid in the garden:—from a false
Mistaken honour she hath deeply erred,
And I shall question further. [*Ringing the bell.*
Who waits now
Within the antechamber? You, Duke Alva,
I need no longer.—Go.

ALVA.

And has my zeal
A second time displeased your Majesty?

KING (*to a* PAGE *who enters*).

Summon Domingo. Duke, I pardon you
For having made me tremble, for a moment,

With secret apprehension, lest yourself
Might fall a victim to a foul misdeed.

[*Exit* ALVA.

SCENE IV.

The KING, DOMINGO.

[KING *walks up and down the room to collect his thoughts.*

DOMINGO (*after contemplating the* KING *for some time with a respectful silence*).

How joyfully surprised I am to find
Your Majesty so tranquil and collected.

KING.

Surprised!

DOMINGO.

And Heav'n be thank'd my fears were groundless!
Now may I hope the best.

KING.

Your fears! What feared you?

DOMINGO.

I dare not hide it from your Majesty
That I have learn'd a secret——

KING (*gloomily*).

And have I
Express'd a wish to share your secret with you?
Who ventures to anticipate me thus?—
Too forward, by mine honour!

DOMINGO.

Gracious monarch!
The place, the occasion, seal of secrecy
'Neath which I learn'd it—free me from this charge.
It was entrusted to me at the seat
Of penitence—entrusted as a crime
That deeply weigh'd upon the tender soul
Of the fair sinner who confess'd her guilt,
And sought the pardon of offended Heaven.
Too late the Princess weeps a foul misdeed
That may involve the Queen herself in ruin.

KING.

Indeed! Kind soul!—You have correctly guess'd
The occasion of your summons. You must guide me

Through this dark labyrinth wherein blind zeal
Has tangled me. From you I hope for truth.
Be candid with me; what must I believe,
And what determine? From your sacred office
I look for strictest truth.

DOMINGO.

And if, my liege,
The mildness ever incident to this
My holy calling, did not such restraint
Impose upon me, still I would entreat
Your Majesty, for your own peace of mind,
To urge no farther this discovery,
And cease for ever to pursue a secret
Which never can be happily explain'd.
All that is yet discover'd may be pardon'd.
Let the King say the word—and then the Queen
Has never sinn'd. The Monarch's will bestows
Virtue and fortune, both with equal ease.
And the King's undisturb'd tranquillity
Is, in itself, sufficient to destroy
The rumours set on foot by calumny.

KING.

What! Rumours! and of me! among my subjects!

DOMINGO.

All falsehood sire! Naught but the vilest falsehood!
I'll swear 'tis false!—Yet what's believed by all,
Groundless and unconfirm'd altho' it be,
Works its effect, as sure as truth itself.

KING.

Not in this case, by Heaven!

DOMINGO.

A virtuous name
Is, after all, my Liege, the only prize
Which queens and peasants' wives contest together.

KING.

For which I surely have no need to tremble.

[*He looks doubtingly at* DOMINGO.—*After a pause.*

Priest, thou hast something fearful to impart.
Delay it not. I read it plainly stamp'd
In thy ill-boding looks. Then out with it,

Whate'er it be. Let me no longer tremble
Upon the rack. What do the people say?

DOMINGO.

The people, sire, are liable to err,
Nay err assuredly. What people think
Should not alarm the King. Yet that they should
Presume so far as to indulge such thoughts——

KING.

Why must I beg this poisonous draught so long?

DOMINGO.

The people often muse upon that month
Which brought your Majesty so near the grave.
From that time, thirty weeks had scarce elapsed,
Before the Queen's delivery was announced——

[*The* KING *rises and rings the bell.* DUKE ALVA *enters.* DOMINGO *alarmed.*

I am amazed, your Majesty!

KING (*going towards* ALVA).

Toledo!

You are a man—defend me from this Priest!

DOMINGO (*he and* DUKE ALVA *exchange embarrassed looks.—After a pause*).

Could we have but foreseen that this occurrence
Would be revenged upon its mere relater——

KING

Said you a bastard? I had scarce, you say,
Escaped the pangs of death when first she felt
She should, in nature's time, become a mother.
Explain how this occurred! 'Twas then, if I
Remember right, that you, in every church,
Ordered devotions to St. Dominick,
For the especial wonder he vouchsafed.—
On one side or the other, then, you lie!—
What would you have me credit? O, I see
Full plainly through you now! If this dark plot
Had then been ripe, your saint had lost his fame.

ALVA.

This plot?

KING.

How can you with a harmony

So unexampled, in your very thoughts
Concur, and not have first conspired together?
Would you persuade me thus? Think you that I
Perceived not with what eagerness you pounced
Upon your prey? With what delight you fed
Upon my pain,—my agony of grief?
Full well I mark'd the ardent, burning zeal
With which the Duke forestall'd the mark of grace
I destined for my son. And how this Priest
Presumed to fortify his petty spleen
With my wrath's giant arm! I am, forsooth,
A bow which each of you may bend at pleasure!
But I have yet a will. And if I needs
Must doubt—perhaps I may begin with you.

ALVA.

Reward like this, our truth did ne'er expect.

KING.

Your truth! Truth warns of apprehended danger.
'Tis malice that speaks only of the past.
What can I gain by your officiousness?
Should your suspicions ripen to full truth,
What follows but the pang of separation,
The melancholy triumph of revenge?
But no: you only fear—you feed me with
Conjectures vague. To hell's profound abyss
You lead me on, then flee yourselves away.

DOMINGO.

What other proofs than these are possible,
When our own eyes can scarcely trust themselves?

KING (*after a long pause, turning earnestly and solemnly towards* DOMINGO).

The grandees of the realm shall be convened,
And I will sit in judgment. Then step forth
In front of all, if you have courage for it,
And charge her as a strumpet. She shall die—
Die without mercy—and the Prince, too, with her!
But mark me well: if she but clear herself,
That doom shall fall on you. Now dare you show
Honour to truth by such a sacrifice?

Determine.—No, you dare not. You are silent,
Such is the zeal of liars!

ALVA (*who has stood at a distance, answers coldly and calmly*).
I will do it.

KING (*turns round with astonishment and looks at the* DUKE *for a long time without moving*).
That's boldly said! But thou hast risk'd thy life
In stubborn conflicts for far less a prize.
Hast risk'd it with a gamester's recklessness—
For honour's empty bubble. What is life
To thee? I'll not expose the royal blood
To such a madman's power, whose highest hope
Must be, to yield his wretched being up
With some renown. I spurn your offer. Go;
And wait my orders in the audience chamber.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The KING *alone.*

Now give me, gracious Providence! a man.
Thou'st given me much already. Now vouchsafe me
A man! for thou alone canst grant the boon.
Thine eye doth penetrate all hidden things.
O! give me but a friend: for I am not
Omniscient like to Thee. The ministers,
Whom thou hast chosen for me, thou dost know—
And their deserts: and as their merits claim,
I value them. Their subjugated vices,
Coerced by rein severe, serve all my ends,
As thy storms purify this nether world.
I thirst for truth.—To reach its tranquil spring,
Through the dark heaps of thick surrounding error,
Is not the lot of kings. Give me the man,
So rarely found, of pure and open heart,
Of judgment clear, and eye unprejudiced,
To aid me in the search.—I cast the lots.
And may I find that man, among the thousands
Who flutter in the sunshine of a court.

[*He opens an escritoir and takes out a portfolio. After turning over the leaves a long time.*

Nothing but names, mere names are here:—no note
E'en of the services to which they owe
Their place upon the roll! O what can be
Of shorter memory than gratitude?
Here, in this other list, I read each fault
Most accurately mark'd. That is not well!
Can vengeance stand in need of such a help?
[*He reads farther.*
Count Egmont! What doth he here? Long ago
The victory of St. Quentin is forgotten.
I place him with the dead.
[*He effaces this name and writes it on the other roll; after he has read farther.*
The Marquis Posa!
The Marquis Posa!—I can scarce recall
This person to my mind. And doubly mark'd!
A proof I destined him for some great purpose.
How is it possible? This man, till now,
Has ever shunn'd my presence—still has fled
His royal debtor's eye? The only man,
By Heaven, within the compass of my realm,
Who does not court my favour. Did he burn
With avarice, or ambition, long ago
He had appear'd before my throne. I'll try
This wondrous man. He who can thus dispense
With royalty, will doubtless speak the truth.

Scene VI.

The Audience Chamber.

DON CARLOS *in conversation with the* PRINCE OF PARMA. DUKES ALVA, FERIA, *and* MEDINA SIDONIA, COUNT LERMA, *and other Grandees, with papers in their hands, awaiting the* KING.

MEDINA SIDONIA (*seems to be shunned by all the Grandees, turns towards* DUKE ALVA, *who, alone and absorbed in himself, walks up and down*).
Duke, you have had an audience of the King.
How did you find him minded?

ALVA.

Somewhat ill
For you, and for the news you bring.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

My heart
Was lighter 'mid the roar of English cannon,
Than here on Spanish ground.

[CARLOS, *who had regarded him with silent sympathy, now approaches him and presses his hand.*

My warmest thanks,
Prince, for this generous tear!—You may perceive
How all avoid me. Now my fate is seal'd.

CARLOS.

Still hope the best both from my father's favour,
And your own innocence.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

Prince! I have lost
A fleet, more mighty than e'er ploughed the waves.
And what is such a head as mine, to set
'Gainst seventy sunken galleons? And therewith
Five hopeful sons! Alas! that breaks my heart.

SCENE VII.

The KING *enters from his Chamber, attired. The former all uncover and make room on both sides, while they form a semicircle round him.—Silence.*

KING (*rapidly surveying the whole circle*).

Be covered all.

[DON CARLOS *and the* PRINCE OF PARMA *approach first and kiss the* KING'S *hand: he turns with friendly mien to the latter, taking no notice of his son.*

Your mother, nephew, fain
Would be inform'd what favour you have won
Here in Madrid.

PARMA.

That question let her ask
When I have fought my maiden battle, Sire.

KING.

Be satisfied, your turn will come at last,
When these old props decay.

[*To the* DUKE OF FERIA.

What brings you here?

FERIA (*kneeling to the* KING).

The Master, Sire, of Calatrava's order
This morning died. I here return his cross.

KING (*takes the order and looks round the whole circle*).

And who is worthiest after him to wear it?

[*He beckons to* DUKE ALVA, *who approaches and bends on one knee. The* KING *hangs the order on his neck.*

You are my ablest General! Ne'er aspire
To more, and, Duke, my favours shall not fail you.

[*He perceives the* DUKE *of* MEDINA SIDONIA.

My Admiral!

MEDINA SIDONIA.

And here you see, great king,
All that remains of the Armada's might,
And of the flower of Spain.

KING (*after a pause*).

God rules above us!
I sent you to contend with men, and not
With rocks and storms. You're welcome to Madrid.

[*Extending his hand to him to kiss.*

I thank you for preserving in yourself
A faithful servant to me. For as such
I value him, my Lords; and 'tis my will
That you should honour him.

[*He motions him to rise and cover himself, then turns to the others.*

What more remains?

[*To* DON CARLOS *and the* PRINCE OF PARMA.

Princes, I thank you!

[*They retire; the other Grandees approach, and kneeling, hand their papers to the* KING. *He looks over them rapidly, and hands them to* DUKE ALVA.

Duke! let these be laid

Before me in the Council. Who waits further?
[*No one answers*
How comes it that amidst my train of nobles
The Marquis Posa ne'er appears? I know
This Marquis Posa served me with distinction.
Does he still live? Why is he not among you?

LERMA.

The Chevalier is just return'd from travel,
Completed through all Europe. He is now
Here in Madrid, and waits a public day
To cast himself before his Sovereign's feet

ALVA.

The Marquis Posa!—Right, he is the same
Bold Knight of Malta, Sire, of whom renown
Proclaims this gallant deed. Upon a summons
Of the Grand Master, all the valiant knights
Assembled in their Island, at that time
Besieged by Soliman. This noble youth,
Scarce numbering eighteen summers, straightway fled
From Alcala, where he pursued his studies,
And suddenly arrived at La Valette.
"This Cross," he said, "was bought for me; and now
To prove I'm worthy of it." He was one
Of forty knights who held St. Elmo's Castle,
At mid-day, 'gainst Piali, Ulucciali,
And Mustapha, and Hassem; the assault
Being thrice repeated. When the Castle fell,
And all the valiant knights were kill'd around him,
He plunged into the ocean, and alone
Reached La Valette in safety. Two months after,
The foe deserts the island, and the knight
Return'd to end his interrupted studies.

FERIA.

It was the Marquis Posa, too, who crush'd
The dread conspiracy in Catalonia;
And by his mark'd activity, preserved
That powerful Province to the Spanish Crown.

KING.

I am amazed! What sort of man is this,
Who can deserve so highly, yet awake

No pang of envy in the breasts of three
Who speak his praise? The character he owns
Must be of noble stamp, indeed, or else
A very blank. I'm curious to behold
This wond'rous man. [*To* DUKE ALVA.
Conduct him to the Council
When mass is over.
[*Exit* DUKE. *The* KING *calls* FERIA.
And do you preside
Here in my place. [*Exit.*

FERIA
The King is kind to-day.

MEDINA SIDONIA.
Call him a god! So he has proved to me!

FERIA.
You well deserve your fortune, Admiral!
You have my warmest wishes.

ONE OF THE GRANDEES.
Sir, and mine.

A SECOND.
And also mine!

A THIRD.
My heart exults with joy—
So excellent a General!

THE FIRST.
The King
Show'd you no kindness,—'twas your strict desert.

LERMA (*to* MEDINA SIDONIA, *taking leave*).
O, how two little words have made your fortune!
[*Exeunt all.*

SCENE VIII.

The KING'S *Cabinet.*

MARQUIS POSA, *and* DUKE ALVA.

MARQUIS (*as he enters*)
Does he want me?—What, me?—Impossible!
You must mistake the name What can he want
With me?

ALVA
To know you.

MARQUIS.

Curiosity!
No more; and I regret the precious minutes
That I must lose: time passes swiftly by.

ALVA.

I now commend you to your lucky stars.
The King is in your hands. Employ this moment
To your own best advantage; for, remember,
If it is lost, you are alone to blame.

SCENE IX.

The MARQUIS *alone.*

MARQUIS.

Duke, 'tis well spoken! Turn to good account
The moment which presents itself but once!
Truly this courtier reads a useful lesson:
If not in his sense good, at least in mine.
[*Walks a few steps backwards and forwards.*
How came I here? Is it caprice or chance
That shows me now my image in this mirror?
Why, out of millions, should it picture me—
The most unlikely—and present my form
To the King's memory?—Was this but chance?—
Perhaps 'twas something more!—What else is chance
But the rude stone which from the sculptor's hand
Receives its life?—Chance comes from Providence,
And man must mould it to his own designs.
What the King wants with me but little matters;
I know the business I shall have with him.
Were but one spark of truth with boldness flung
Into the despot's soul, how fruitful 'twere
In the kind hand of Providence; and so
What first appear'd capricious act of chance,
May be design'd for some momentous end.
Whate'er it be, I'll act on this belief.

[*He takes a few turns in the room, and stands at last in tranquil contemplation before a painting. The* KING *appears in the neighbouring room, where he gives some orders. He then enters and stands mo-*

tionless at the door, and contemplates the MARQUIS *for some time; without being observed.*

SCENE X.

The KING, *and* MARQUIS POSA.

[*The* MARQUIS, *as soon as he observes the* KING, *comes forward and sinks on one knee; then rises and remains standing before him without any sign of confusion.*

KING (*looks at him with surprise*).

We've met before then?—

MARQUIS.

No.

KING.

You did my Crown
Some service? Why then do you shun my thanks?
My memory is throng'd with suitors' claims.
One only is Omniscient. 'Twas your duty
To seek your monarch's eye!—Why did you not?

MARQUIS.

Two days have scarce elapsed since my return
From foreign travel, Sire.

KING.

I would not stand
Indebted to a subject; ask some favour—

MARQUIS.

I enjoy the laws.

KING.

So does the murderer!

MARQUIS.

Then how much more the honest citizen!
My lot contents me, Sire.

KING (*aside*).

By heavens! a proud
And dauntless mind!—That was to be expected.
Proud I would have my Spaniards. Better far
The cup should overflow, than not be full.
They say you've left my service?

MARQUIS.

To make way
For some one worthier, I withdrew.

KING.

'Tis pity.
When spirits such as yours make holiday,
The State must suffer. But perchance you fear'd
To miss the post best suited to your merits.

MARQUIS.

O no! I doubt not the experienced judge,
In human nature skill'd—his proper study,—
Will have discover'd at a glance wherein
I may be useful to him, wherein not.
With deepest gratitude, I feel the favour
Wherewith, by so exalted an opinion,
Your Majesty is loading me; and yet— [*He pauses.*

KING.

You hesitate?

MARQUIS.

I am, I must confess,
Sire, at this moment, unprepared to clothe
My thoughts, as the world's citizen, in phrase
Beseeming to your subject. When I left
The court for ever, Sire, I deem'd myself
Released from the necessity to give
My reasons for this step.

KING.

Are they so weak?
What do you fear to risk by their disclosure?

MARQUIS.

My life at farthest, Sire,—were time allow'd
For me to weary you—but this denied—
Then truth itself must suffer. I must choose
'Twixt your displeasure and contempt. And if
I must decide, I rather would appear
Worthy of punishment than pity.

KING (*with a look of expectation*).

Well?

MARQUIS.

I cannot be the servant of a prince.

[*The* KING *looks at him with astonishment.*

I will not cheat the buyer. Should you deem
Me worthy of your service, you prescribe
A course of duty for me; you command
My arm in battle, and my head in council.
Then, not my actions, but the applause they meet
At court, becomes their object. But for me,
Virtue possesses an intrinsic worth.
I would, myself, create that happiness,
A monarch, with my hand, would seek to plant;
And duty's task would prove an inward joy,
And be my willing choice. Say, like you this?
And in your own creation, could you bear
A new creator? For I ne'er could stoop
To be the chisel, where I fain would be
The sculptor's self. I dearly love mankind,
My gracious Liege, but in a monarchy,
I dare not love another than myself.

KING.

This ardour is most laudable. You wish
To do good deeds to others; how you do them,
Is but of small account to patriots,
Or to the wise. Choose then within these realms
The office, where you best may satisfy
This noble impulse.

MARQUIS.

'Tis not to be found.

KING.

How!

MARQUIS.

What your Majesty would spread abroad,
Through these my hands—is it the good of men?
Is it the happiness that my pure love
Would to mankind impart? Before such bliss
Monarchs would tremble. No! Court policy
Has raised up new enjoyments for mankind,
Which she is always rich enough to grant;
And waken'd, in the hearts of men, new wishes
Which such enjoyments only can content.
In her own mint, she coins the truth—such truth!—
As she herself can tolerate: all forms

Unlike her own are broken. But is that
Which can content the court, enough for me?
Must my affection for my brother, pledge
Itself to work my brother injury?
To call him happy, when he dare not think?
Sire choose not me, to spread the happiness
Which you have stamp'd for us. I must decline
To circulate such coin. I cannot be
The servant of a prince.

KING (*suddenly*).

You are, perhaps,
A Protestant?

MARQUIS (*after some reflection*).

Our creeds, my liege, are one. [*A pause.*
I am misunderstood. I fear'd as much.
You see the veil torn by my hand aside
From all the mysteries of Majesty.
Who can assure you I shall still regard
As sacred, that which ceases to alarm me?
I may seem dangerous, because I think
Above myself.—I am not so, my Liege;
My wishes lie corroding here. The rage
[*Laying his hand on his breast.*
For innovation, which but serves t' increase
The heavy weight of chains it cannot break,
Shall never fire my blood! The world is yet
Unripe for my Ideal; and I live
A citizen of ages yet to come.
But does a fancied picture break your rest?
A breath of yours destroys it.

KING.

Say am I
The first to whom your views are known?

MARQUIS.

You are.

KING (*rises, walks a few paces, and then stops opposite the* MARQUIS—*aside*).

This tone, at least, is new; but flattery
Exhausts itself. And men of talent still
Disdain to imitate. So let us test
Its opposite for once. Why should I not?

There is a charm in novelty.—Should we
Be so agreed, I will bethink me now
Of some new State employment, in whose duties
Your powerful mind——

MARQUIS.

Sire, I perceive how small,
How mean, your notions are of manly worth.
Suspecting, in an honest man's discourse,
Nought but a flatterer's artifice,—methinks
I can explain the cause of this your error.
Mankind compel you to it. With free choice
They have disclaim'd their true nobility,
Lower'd themselves to their degraded state.—
Before man's inward worth, as from a phantom,
They fly in terror,—and contented with
Their poverty, they ornament their chains
With slavish prudence; and they call it virtue,
To bear them with a show of resignation.
Thus did you find the world, and thus it was
By your great father handed o'er to you.
In this debased condition—how could you
Respect mankind?

KING.

Your words contain some truth.

MARQUIS.

Alas! that when from the Creator's hand
You took mankind, and moulded him to suit
Your own ideas, making yourself the god
Of this new creature, you should overlook
That you yourself remained a human being—
A very man, as from God's hands you came.—
Still did you feel a mortal's wants and pains,
You needed sympathy; but to a God
One can but sacrifice, and pray, and tremble—
Wretched exchange! Perversion most unblest
Of sacred nature!—Once degrade mankind,
And make him but a thing to play upon,
Who then can share the harmony with you?

KING (*aside*).

By Heaven, he moves me!

MARQUIS.

But this sacrifice
To you is valueless. You thus become
A thing apart, a species of your own—
This is the price you pay for being a god!
'Twere dreadful were it not so, and if you
Gain'd nothing by the misery of millions!
And if the very freedom you destroy'd
Were the sole blessing, that could make you happy!
Dismiss me, Sire, I pray you; for my theme
Bears me too far—my heart is full—too strong
The charm, to stand before the only man
To whom I may reveal it.

[*The* COUNT LERMA *enters, and whispers a few words to the* KING, *who signs him to withdraw, and continues sitting in his former posture.*

KING (*to the* MARQUIS, *after* LERMA *is gone*)

Nay, continue.

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

I feel, Sire—all the worth——

KING.

Proceed—you had
Yet more to say to me.

MARQUIS.

Your Majesty,
I lately pass'd through Flanders and Brabant,
So many rich and blooming provinces,
Fill'd with a valiant, great, and honest people!
To be the father of a race like this,
I thought must be divine indeed! and then
I stumbled on a heap of burnt men's bones!

[*He stops, he fixes a penetrating look on the* KING, *who endeavours to return his glance; but he looks on the ground embarrassed and confused.*

True, you are forced to act so; but that you
Could dare fulfil your task—this fills my soul
With shuddering horror! O 'tis pity that
The Victim, weltering in his blood, must cease
To chant the praises of his sacrificer!

And that mere men—not beings loftier far—
Should write the history of the world. But soon
A milder age will follow that of Philip,
An age of truer wisdom:—hand in hand,
The subjects' welfare, and the Sovereign's greatness,
Will walk in union. Then the careful state
Will spare her children, and necessity
No longer glory to be thus inhuman.

KING.

When, think you, would that blessed age arrive,
If I had shrunk before the curse of this?
Behold my Spain, see here the burgher's good
Blooms in eternal and unclouded peace.
A peace like this will I bestow on Flanders.

MARQUIS (*hastily*).

The churchyard's peace! And do you hope to end
What you have now begun? Say, do you hope
To check the ripening change of Christendom,
The universal spring, that shall renew
The earth's fair form? Would you alone, in Europe,
Fling yourself down before the rapid wheel
Of destiny—which rolls its ceaseless course—
And seize its spokes with human arm. Vain thought!
Already thousands have your kingdom fled,
In joyful poverty: the honest burgher
For his faith exiled, was your noblest subject!
See, with a mother's arms, Elizabeth
Welcomes the fugitives, and Britain blooms
In rich luxuriance, from our country's arts.
Bereft of the new Christian's industry,
Grenada lies forsaken, and all Europe,
Exulting, sees its foe oppress'd with wounds,
By its own hands inflicted!

[*The* KING *is moved; the* MARQUIS *observes it, and advances a step nearer.*

You would plant
For all eternity—and yet the seeds
You sow around you are the seeds of death!
This hopeless task, with nature's laws at strife,
Will ne'er survive the spirit of its founder.
You labour for ingratitude:—in vain,

With nature you engage in desperate struggle—
In vain you waste your high and royal life,
In projects of destruction. Man is greater
Than you esteem him. He will burst the chains
Of a long slumber, and reclaim once more
His just and hallow'd rights. With Nero's name,
And fell Busiris', will he couple yours:
And—ah! you once deserved a better fate.

KING.

How know you that?

MARQUIS.

In very truth you did—
Yes, I repeat it—by the Almighty power!
Restore us all you have deprived us of,
And, generous as strong, let happiness
Flow from your horn of plenty—let man's mind
Ripen in your vast empire—give us back
All you have taken from us—and become,
Amidst a thousand kings, a king indeed!

[*He advances boldly, and fixes on him a look of earnestness and enthusiasm.*

O! that the eloquence of all those myriads,
Whose fate depends on this momentous hour,
Could hover on my lips, and fan the spark
That lights thine eye into a glorious flame!
Renounce the mimicry of godlike powers
Which levels us to nothing. Be, in truth,
An image of the Deity himself!
Never did mortal man possess so much,
For purpose so divine. The kings of Europe
Pay homage to the name of Spain. Be you
The leader of these kings. One pen-stroke now,
One motion of your hand, can new create
The earth!—but grant us liberty of thought

[*Casts himself at his feet.*

KING (*surprised, turns away his face, then again looks towards the* MARQUIS).

Enthusiast most strange! arise; but I——

MARQUIS.

Look round on all the glorious face of nature,
On freedom it is founded—see how rich,

Through freedom, it has grown. The great Creator
Bestows upon the worm its drop of dew,
And gives free-will a triumph, in abodes
Where lone corruption reigns. See *your* creation,
How small, how poor! The rustling of a leaf
Alarms the mighty lord of Christendom.
Each virtue makes you quake with fear. While he,
Not to disturb fair freedom's blest appearance,
Permits the frightful ravages of evil
To waste his fair domains. The great Creator,
We see not—he conceals himself within
His own eternal laws. The sceptic sees
Their operation, but beholds not Him.
"Wherefore a God!" he cries, "the world itself
Suffices for itself!" And Christian prayer
Ne'er praised him more, than doth this blasphemy.

KING.

And will you undertake to raise up this
Exalted standard of weak human nature
In my dominions?

MARQUIS.

You can do it, Sire!
Who else? Devote to your own people's bliss,
The kingly power, which has too long enrich'd
The greatness of the throne alone. Restore
The prostrate dignity of human nature,
And let the subject be, what once he was,
The end and object of the monarch's care,
Bound by no duty, save a brother's love.
And when mankind is to itself restored,
Roused to a sense of its own innate worth,
When freedom's lofty virtues proudly flourish—
Then, Sire, when you have made your own wide realms
The happiest in the world, it then may be
Your duty, to subdue the universe.

KING (*after a long pause*).

I've heard you to the end. Far differently
I find, than in the minds of other men,
The world exists in yours. And you shall not
By foreign laws be judged. I am the first
To whom you have your secret self disclosed;

I know it—so believe it—for the sake
Of this forbearance—that you have till now
Conceal'd these sentiments, although embraced
With so much ardour,—for this cautious prudence,
I will forget, young man, that I have learn'd them,
And how I learn'd them. Rise! I will confute
Your youthful dreams, by my matured experience,
Not by my power as king. Such is my will,
And therefore act I thus. Poison itself
May, in a worthy nature, be transform'd
To some benignant use.—But, Sir, beware
My Inquisition! 'Twould afflict me much—

MARQUIS.

Indeed!

KING (*lost in surprise*).

Ne'er met I such a man as this.
No, Marquis, no! you wrong me! Not to you
Will I become a Nero—not to you!—
All happiness shall not be blasted round me,
And you at least, beneath my very eyes,
May dare continue to remain a man.

MARQUIS (*quickly*).

And, Sire! my fellow subjects? Not for me,
Nor my own cause, I pleaded. Sire! your subjects—

KING.

Nay, if you know so well how future times
Will judge me, let them learn at least from you,
That when I found a man, I could respect him.

MARQUIS.

O let not the most just of kings, at once
Be the most unjust! In your realm of Flanders,
There are a thousand better men than I.
But you—Sire! may I dare to say so much—
For the first time, perhaps, see liberty
In milder form portrayed.

KING (*with gentle severity*).

No more of this,
Young man! You would, I know, think otherwise
Had you but learn'd to understand mankind
As I.—But truly—I would not this meeting
Should prove our last.—How can I hope to win you?

MARQUIS.

Pray leave me as I am. What value, Sire,
Should I be to you, were you to corrupt me?

KING.

This pride I will not bear. From this day forth
I hold you in my service.—No remonstrance—
For I will have it so. [*After a pause.*
But how is this?
What would I now? Was it not truth I wish'd?
But here is something more. Marquis, so far
You've learn'd to know me as a King; but yet
You know me not as man—
[*The* MARQUIS *seems to meditate.*
I understand you—
Were I the most unfortunate of fathers,
Yet as a husband may I not be blest?

MARQUIS.

If the possession of a hopeful son,
And a most lovely spouse, confer a claim
On mortal, to assume that title, Sire,
In both respects, you are supremely blest.

KING (*with a serious look*).

That am I not—and never, till this hour,
Have I so deeply felt that I am not so.
[*Contemplating the* MARQUIS *with a look of melancholy*

MARQUIS.

The Prince possesses a right noble mind.
I ne'er have known him otherwise.

KING.

I have!
The treasure he has robb'd me of, no crown
Can e'er requite.—So virtuous a Queen!

MARQUIS.

Who dare assert it, Sire?

KING.

The world! and scandal!
And I myself! Here lie the damning proofs
Of doubtless guilt—and others, too, exist,
From which I fear the worst. But still 'tis hard
To trust one proof alone.—Who brings the charge?

And O! if this were possible—that she,
The Queen, so foully could pollute her honour,
Then how much easier were it to believe
An Eboli may be a slanderer!
Does not that Priest detest my son and her?
And can I doubt that Alva broods revenge?
My wife has higher worth than all together.

MARQUIS.

And there exists besides in woman's soul,
A treasure, Sire, beyond all outward show,
Above the reach of slander—female virtue!

KING.

Marquis! those thoughts are mine. It costs too much
To sink so low as they accuse the Queen.
The sacred ties of honour are not broken
With so much ease, as some would fain persuade me
Marquis, you know mankind. Just such a man
As you I long have wish'd for—you are kind—
Cheerful—and deeply versed in human nature—
Therefore I've chosen you——

MARQUIS (*surprised and alarmed*).

Me, Sire!

KING.

You stand
Before your King and ask no special favour—
For yourself nothing!—that is new to me—
You will be just—ne'er weakly swayed by passion.
Watch my son close—search the Queen's inmost heart,
You shall have power to speak with her in private.
Retire [*He rings a bell.*

MARQUIS.

And if with but *one* hope fulfill'd
I now depart, then is this day indeed
The happiest of my life.

KING (*holds out his hand to him to kiss*).

I hold it not
Amongst my days a lost one.

[*The* MARQUIS *rises and goes.* COUNT LERMA *enters*

Count, in future,
The Marquis is to enter, unannounced.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Queen's Apartment.

QUEEN, DUCHESS OLIVAREZ, PRINCESS EBOLI, COUNTESS FUENTES.

QUEEN (*to the first Lady as she rises*).

And so the key has not been found! My casket
Must be forced open then—and that at once.

[*She observes* PRINCESS EBOLI, *who approaches and kisses her hand.*

Welcome, dear Princess! I rejoice to see you
So near recover'd. But you still look pale.

FUENTES (*with malice*).

The fault of that vile fever which affects
The nerves so painfully. Is't not, Princess?

QUEEN.

I wish'd to visit you, dear Eboli,
But dared not.

OLIVAREZ.

O! the Princess Eboli
Was not in want of company.

QUEEN.

Why that
I readily believe, but what's the matter?
You tremble——

PRINCESS.

Nothing—nothing gracious Queen
Permit me to retire.

QUEEN.

You hide it from us—
And are far worse than you would have us think.
Standing must weary you. Assist her, Countess,
And let her rest awhile upon that seat

PRINCESS (*going*)

I shall be better in the open air.

QUEEN.

Attend her, Countess. What a sudden illness!

[*A* PAGE *enters and speaks to the* DUCHESS, *who then addresses the* QUEEN.

OLIVAREZ.

The Marquis Posa waits, your Majesty,
With orders from the King.

QUEEN.

Admit him then.

[PAGE *admits the* MARQUIS *and exit.*

SCENE II.

MARQUIS POSA. *The former.*

The MARQUIS *falls on one knee before the* QUEEN, *who signs to him to rise.*

QUEEN.

What are my Lord's commands? And may I dare
Thus publicly to hear——

MARQUIS.

My business is
In private with your royal Majesty.

[*The Ladies retire on a signal from the* QUEEN.

SCENE III.

The QUEEN, MARQUIS POSA.

QUEEN (*full of astonishment*).

How! Marquis, dare I trust my eyes? Are you
Commission'd to me from the King?

MARQUIS.

Does this
Seem such a wonder to your Majesty?
To me 'tis otherwise.

QUEEN.

The world must sure
Have wandered from its course! That you and he—
I must confess——

MARQUIS.

It does sound somewhat strange—
But be it so. The present times abound
In prodigies.

QUEEN.

But none can equal this.

MARQUIS.

Suppose I had at last allow'd myself
To be converted, and had weary grown
Of playing the eccentric at the court
Of Philip. The eccentric! What is that?
He who would be of service to mankind,
Must first endeavour to resemble them.
What end is gain'd by the vain-glorious garb
Of the sectarian? Then suppose—for who
From vanity is so completely free
As for his creed to seek no proselytes?—
Suppose, I say, I had it in my mind
To place my own opinions on the throne!

QUEEN.

No marquis! no! Not even in jest could I
Suspect you of so wild a scheme as this—
No visionary you!—to undertake
What you can ne'er accomplish.

MARQUIS.

But that seems
To be the very point at issue.

QUEEN.

What
I chiefly blame you, Marquis, for, and what
Could well estrange me from you—is—

MARQUIS.

Perhaps
Duplicity!

QUEEN.

At least—a want of candour.
Perhaps the King himself has no desire
You should impart, what now you mean to tell me.

MARQUIS.

No.

QUEEN.

And can evil means be justified
By honest ends? And—pardon me the doubt—
Can your high bearing stoop to such an office?
I scarce can think it.

MARQUIS.

Nor, indeed, could I,
Were my sole purpose to deceive the King.
'Tis not my wish—I mean to serve him now
More honestly than he himself commands.

QUEEN.

'Tis spoken like yourself. Enough of this—
What would the King?

MARQUIS.

The King? I can, it seems,
Retaliate quickly on my rigid judge:
And what I have deferr'd so long to tell,
Your Majesty, perhaps, would willingly
Longer defer to hear. But still it must
Be heard. The King requests your Majesty
Will grant no audience to the ambassador
Of France to-day. Such were my high commands—
They're executed.

QUEEN.

Marquis, is that all
You have to tell me from him?

MARQUIS.

Nearly all
That justifies me thus to seek your presence.

QUEEN.

Well, Marquis, I'm contented not to hear
What should, perhaps, remain a secret from me.

MARQUIS.

True, Queen! though were you other than yourself,
I should inform you straight of certain things—
Warn you of certain men—but this to you
Were a vain office. Danger may arise
And disappear around you, unperceived.
You will not know it—of too little weight
To chase the slumber from your angel brow.

But 'twas not this, in sooth, that brought me hither,
Prince Carlos——

QUEEN.

What of him? How have you left him?

MARQUIS.

E'en as the only wise man of his time,
In whom it is a crime to worship truth—
And ready, for his love to risk his life,
As the wise sage for his. I bring few words—
But here he is himself.

[*Giving the* QUEEN *a letter.*

QUEEN (*after she had read it*).

He says he must
Speak with me—

MARQUIS.

So do I.

QUEEN.

And will he thus
Be happy—when he sees with his own eyes,
That I am wretched?

MARQUIS.

No; but more resolved,
More active

QUEEN.

How?

MARQUIS.

Duke Alva is appointed
To Flanders.

QUEEN.

Yes, appointed—so I hear.

MARQUIS.

The King cannot retract:—we know the King.
This much is clear, the Prince must not remain
Here in Madrid, nor Flanders be abandon'd.

QUEEN.

And can you hinder it?

MARQUIS.

Perhaps I can,
But then the means are dangerous as the evil—
Rash as despair—and yet I know no other.

QUEEN.

Name them.

MARQUIS.

To you, and you alone, my Queen,
Will I reveal them: for from you alone,
Carlos will hear them named, without a shudder.
The name they bear is somewhat harsh.

QUEEN.

Rebellion!

MARQUIS.

He must prove faithless to the King, and fly
With secrecy to Brussels, where the Flemings
Wait him with open arms. The Netherlands
Will rise at his command. Our glorious cause
From the King's son will gather matchless strength,
The Spanish throne shall tremble at his arms,
And what his sire denied him in Madrid,
That will he willingly concede in Brussels.

QUEEN.

You've spoken with the King to-day— and yet
Maintain all this.

MARQUIS.

Yes, I maintain it all,
Because I spoke with him.

QUEEN (*after a pause*).

The daring plan
Alarms and pleases me. You may be right—
The thought is bold, and that perhaps enchants me
Let it but ripen. Does Prince Carlos know it?

MARQUIS.

It was my wish that he should hear it first
From your own lips.

QUEEN.

The plan is doubtless good,
But then the Prince's youth——

MARQUIS.

No disadvantage!
He there will find the bravest generals
Of th' Emperor Charles—an Egmont and an Orange—
In battle daring, and in council wise.

QUEEN (*with vivacity*).

True—the design is grand and beautiful!
The Prince must act: I feel it sensibly.
The part he's doom'd to play here in Madrid
Has bow'd me to the dust, on his account.
I promise him the aid of France and Savoy;
I think with you, Lord Marquis—he must act—
But this design needs money—

MARQUIS.

It is ready.

QUEEN.

I, too, know means.

MARQUIS.

May I then give him hopes
Of seeing you?

QUEEN.

I will consider it.

MARQUIS.

The Prince, my Queen, is urgent for an answer,
I promised to procure it.

[*Presenting his writing tablet to the* QUEEN.

Two short lines
Will be enough.

QUEEN (*after she has written*).

When do we meet again?

MARQUIS.

Whene'er you wish.

QUEEN.

Whene'er I wish it, Marquis!
How can I understand this privilege?

MARQUIS.

As innocently, Queen, as e'er you may.
But we enjoy it—that is sure enough.

QUEEN (*interrupting*).

How will my heart rejoice, should this become
A refuge for the liberties of Europe,
And this through *him!* Count on my silent aid!

MARQUIS (*with animation*).

Right well I knew your heart would understand me.

[*The* DUCHESS OLIVAREZ *enters.*

QUEEN (*coldly to the* MARQUIS).

My Lord! the King's commands I shall respect
As law. Assure him of the Queen's submission.

[*She makes a sign to him. Exit* MARQUIS.

SCENE IV

A Gallery.

DON CARLOS, COUNT LERMA.

CARLOS.

Here we are undisturb'd. What would you now
Impart to me?

LERMA.

Your Highness had a friend
Here at the Court.

CARLOS (*starting*).

A friend! I knew it not!
But what's your meaning?

LERMA.

I must sue for pardon
That I am learn'd in more than I should know.
But for your Highness' comfort, I've received it
From one I may depend upon,—in short,
I have it from *myself.*

CARLOS.

Whom speak you of?

LERMA.

The Marquis Posa.

CARLOS.

What!

LERMA.

And if your Highness
Has trusted to him, more of what concerns you,
Than every one should know, as I am led
To fear—

CARLOS.

You fear!

LERMA.

He has been with the King.

CARLOS.

Indeed!

LERMA.

Two hours in secret converse too.

CARLOS.

Indeed!

LERMA.

The subject was no trifling matter.

CARLOS.

That I can well believe.

LERMA.

And several times
I heard your name.

CARLOS.

That's no bad sign, I hope.

LERMA.

And then, this morning, in the King's apartment,
The Queen was spoken of mysteriously.

CARLOS (*starts back astonished*).

Count Lerma!

LERMA.

When the Marquis had retired,
I was commanded to admit his lordship,
In future, unannounced.

CARLOS.

Astonishing!

LERMA.

And without precedent, do I believe,
Long as I've served the King—

CARLOS.

'Tis strange, indeed!
How did you say the Queen was spoken of?

LERMA (*steps back*).

No, no, my Prince!—that were against my duty.

CARLOS.

'Tis somewhat strange! One secret you impart,
The other you withhold.

LERMA.

The first was due
To you, the other to the King.

CARLOS

You're right.

LERMA.

And still I've thought you, Prince, a man of honour.

CARLOS.

Then you have judged me truly.

LERMA.

But all virtue
Is spotless till it's tried.

CARLOS.

Some stand the trial.

LERMA.

A powerful Monarch's favour is a prize
Worth seeking for; and this alluring bait
Has ruin'd many a virtue.

CARLOS.

Truly said!

LERMA.

And oftentimes 'tis prudent to discover
What scarce can longer be conceal'd.

CARLOS.

Yes, prudent
It may be, but you say you've ever known
The Marquis prove himself a man of honour

LERMA.

And if he be so still, my fears are harmless,
And you become a double gainer, Prince. [*Going.*

CARLOS (*follows him with emotion, and presses his hand*).

Trebly I gain, upright and worthy man,
I gain another friend, nor lose the one
Whom I before possess'd. [*Exit Lerma.*

SCENE V.

MARQUIS POSA *comes through the Gallery.* CARLOS

MARQUIS.

Carlos! My Carlos!

CARLOS.

Who calls me? Ah! 'tis thou—I was in haste
To gain the convent! You will not delay. [*Going.*

MARQUIS.

Hold! for a moment.

CARLOS.

We may be observed.

MARQUIS.

No chance of that. 'Tis over now. The Queen——

CARLOS.

You've seen my father.

MARQUIS.

Yes!—he sent for me.

CARLOS (*full of expectation*).

Well!

MARQUIS.

'Tis all settled—You may see the Queen.

CARLOS.

Yes! but the King! What said the King to you?

MARQUIS.

Not much. Mere curiosity to learn
My history. The zeal of unknown friends—
I know not what. He offered me employment.

CARLOS.

Which you, of course, rejected?

MARQUIS.

Yes, of course!

CARLOS.

How did you separate?

MARQUIS.

O well enough!

CARLOS.

And was I mentioned?

MARQUIS.

Yes; in general terms.

[*Taking out a pocket-book and giving it to the Prince.*

See here are two lines written by the Queen,
To-morrow I will settle where and how.

CARLOS (*reads it carelessly, puts the tablet in his pocket, and is going*).

You'll meet me at the Prior's?

MARQUIS.

Yes! But stay—
Why in such haste? No one is coming hither.

CARLOS (*with a forced smile*).

Have we in truth changed characters? To-day
You seem so bold and confident.

MARQUIS.

To-day,—
Wherefore to-day?

CARLOS.

What writes the Queen to me?

MARQUIS.

Have you not read this instant?

CARLOS.

I? Oh yes.

MARQUIS.

What is't disturbs you now?

CARLOS (*reads the tablet again, delighted and fervently*).

Angel of Heaven!
I will be so,—I will be worthy of thee.
Love elevates great minds. So come what may,
Whatever thou commandest, I'll perform.
She writes that I must hold myself prepared
For a great enterprise! What can she mean?
Dost thou not know?

MARQUIS.

And, Carlos, if I knew.
Say, art thou now prepared to hear it from me?

CARLOS.

Have I offended thee? I was distracted—
Roderigo, pardon me.

MARQUIS.

Distracted! How?

CARLOS.

I scarcely know! But may I keep this tablet?

MARQUIS.

Not so! I came to ask thee for thine own.

CARLOS.

My tablet! Why?

MARQUIS.

And whatsoever writings
You have, unfit to meet a stranger's eye—
Letters or memorandums, and in short,
Your whole portfolio.

CARLOS.

Why?

MARQUIS.

That we may be
Prepared for accidents. Who can prevent
Surprise? They'll never seek them in my keeping.
Here give them to me—

CARLOS (*uneasy*).

Strange! What can it mean?

MARQUIS.

Be not alarmed! 'Tis nothing of importance!
A mere precaution to prevent surprise.
You need not be alarmed!

CARLOS (*gives him the portfolio*).

Be careful of it.

MARQUIS.

Be sure I will.

CARLOS (*looks at him significantly*).

I give thee much, Roderigo!—

MARQUIS.

Not more than I have often had from thee.
The rest we'll talk of yonder. Now farewell. [*Going.*

CARLOS (*struggling with himself, then calls him back*).

Give me my letters back—there's one amongst them
The Queen addressed to me at Alcala,
When I was sick to death. Still next my heart
I carry it—to take this letter from me,
Goes to my very soul. But leave me that,
And take the rest.

[*He takes it out, and returns the portfolio.*

MARQUIS.

I yield unwillingly—
For 'twas that letter which I most requir'd.

CARLOS.

Farewell!

[*He goes away slowly, stops a moment at the door, turns back again, and brings him the letter.*

You have it there.

[*His hand trembles, tears start from his eyes, he falls on the neck of the* MARQUIS, *and presses his face to his bosom.*

O not my father
Could do so much, Roderigo! Not my father!

[*Exit hastily.*

SCENE VI.

MARQUIS (*looks after him with astonishment*).

And is this possible! And to this hour
Have I not known him fully? In his heart
This blemish has escaped my eye. Distrust
Of me—his friend! But no, 'tis calumny!
What hath he done, that I accuse him thus
Of weakest weakness. I myself commit
The fault I charge on him. What I have done
Might well surprise him! When hath he displayed
To his best friend such absolute reserve?
Carlos, I must afflict thee—there's no help—
And longer still distress thy noble soul.
In me the King hath placed his confidence,
His holiest trust reposed—as in a casket,
And this reliance calls for gratitude.
How can disclosure serve thee, when my silence
Brings thee no harm—serves thee, perhaps? Ah! Why
Point to the traveller the impending storm?
Enough, if I direct it's anger past thee!—
And when thou wak'st, the sky's again serene. [*Exit.*

SCENE VII.

The KING'S *Cabinet.*

The KING *seated, near him the* INFANTA CLARA EUGENIA.

KING (*after a deep silence*).

No—she is sure my daughter—or can nature
Thus lie like truth! Yes, that blue eye is mine!
And I am pictured in thy ev'ry feature—

Child of my love! for such thou art—I fold thee
Thus to my heart—thou art my blood— [*Starts and pauses.*
My blood—
What's worse to fear? Are not my features his?
[*Takes the miniature in his hand and looks first at the portrait, then at the mirror opposite, at last he throws it on the ground, rises hastily, and pushes the* INFANTA *from him.*
Away, away! I'm lost in this abyss.

SCENE VIII.

COUNT LERMA *and the* KING

LERMA.

Her Majesty is in the antechamber

KING

What! Now?

LERMA.

And begs the favour of an audience.

KING.

Now! At this unaccustomed hour! Not now—
I cannot see her yet.

LERMA.

Here comes the Queen.
[*Exit* LERMA.

SCENE IX.

The KING, *the* QUEEN *enters, and the* INFANTA.

[*The* INFANTA *runs to meet the* QUEEN *and clings to her; the* QUEEN *falls at the* KING'S *feet, who is silent, and appears confused and embarrassed.*

QUEEN.

My Lord! My husband! I'm constrained to seek
Justice before the throne!

KING.

What! Justice!

QUEEN.

Yes!
I'm treated with dishonour at the Court!
My casket has been rifled.

KING.

What! Your casket?

QUEEN.

And things I highly value have been plunder'd.

KING.

Things that you highly value?

QUEEN.

From the meaning
Which ignorant men's officiousness, perhaps,
Might give to them——

KING.

What's this? Officiousness,
And meaning! How? But rise.

QUEEN.

Oh no, my husband!
Not till you bind yourself, by sacred promise,
By virtue of your own authority,
To find th' offender out, and grant redress,
Or else dismiss my suite, which hides a thief.

KING.

But rise!—In such a posture!—Pray you rise.

QUEEN (*rises*).

'Tis some one of distinction—I know well;
My casket held both diamonds and pearls
Of matchless value, but he only took
My letters.

KING.

May I ask——

QUEEN.

Undoubtedly,
My husband. They were letters from the Prince:
His miniature as well.

KING.

From whom?

QUEEN.

The Prince,
Your son.

KING.

To you?

QUEEN.

Sent by the Prince to me.

KING.

What! From Prince Carlos! Do you tell me that?

QUEEN.

Why not tell you, my husband?

KING.

And not blush?

QUEEN

What mean you? You must surely recollect
The letters, Carlos sent me to St. Germains,
With both Courts' full consent. Whether that leave
Extended to the portrait, or alone
His hasty hope dictated such a step,
I cannot now pretend to answer; but
If even rash, it may at least be pardon'd
For thus much I may be his pledge—that then
He never thought the gift was for his mother.

[*Observes the agitation of the* KING.

What moves you? What's the matter?

INFANTA (*who has found the miniature on the ground, and has been playing with it, brings it to the* QUEEN).

Look, dear mother!
See what a pretty picture!

QUEEN.

What then my——

[*She recognises the miniature, and remains in speechless astonishment. They both gaze at each other.—After a long pause:*

In truth, this mode of trying a wife's heart
Is great and royal, Sire! But I should wish
To ask one question?

KING.

'Tis for me to question

QUEEN.

Let my suspicions spare the innocent,
And if by your command, this theft was done—

KING.

It was so done!

QUEEN.

Then I have none to blame,
And none to pity—other than yourself—
Since you possess a wife, on whom such schemes
Are thrown away.

KING.

This language is not new—
Nor shall you, Madam, now again deceive me
As in the gardens of Aranjuez—
My Queen of angel-purity, who then
So haughtily my accusation spurn'd—
I know her better now.

QUEEN.

What mean you, Sire?

KING.

Madam! thus briefly and without reserve—
Say is it true?—still true, that you conversed
With no one there? Is really that the truth?

QUEEN.

I spoke there with the Prince.

KING.

Then is it clear
As day! So daring!—heedless of mine honour!

QUEEN.

Your honour, Sire! If that be now the question,
A greater honour is, methinks, at stake
Than Castille ever brought me as a dowry.

KING.

Why did you then deny the Prince's presence?

QUEEN.

Because I'm not accustomed to be question'd
Like a delinquent, before all your courtiers;
I never shall deny the truth, when ask'd
With kindness and respect. Was that the tone
Your Majesty used towards me in Aranjuez?
Are your assembled grandees the tribunal
Queens must account to, for their private conduct?
I gave the Prince the interview he sought
With earnest prayer, because, my liege and lord,
I—the Queen—wish'd and will'd it, and because
I never can admit, that formal custom
Should sit as judge on actions that are guiltless:
And I conceal'd it from your Majesty,
Because I chose not to contend with you,
About this right, in presence of your courtiers.

KING.

You speak with boldness, Madam!

QUEEN.

I may add,
Because the Prince, in his own father's heart,
Scarce finds that kindness, he so well deserves.

KING.

So well deserves!

QUEEN.

Why, Sire! should I conceal it?
Highly do I esteem him—yes! and love him
As a most dear relation, who was once
Deem'd worthy of a dearer—tenderer—title.
I've yet to learn, that he, on this account,
Should be estrang'd from me, beyond all others,—
Because he once was better loved than they.
Though your state policy may knit together
What bands it pleases—'tis a harder task
To burst such ties! I will not hate another
For any one's command—and since I must
So speak—such dictates I will not endure.

KING.

Elizabeth! you've seen me in weak moments—
And their remembrance now emboldens you.
On that strong influence you now depend,
Which you have often, with so much success,
Against my firmness tried. But fear the more!
The power which has seduced me to be weak,
May yet inflame me to some act of madness.

QUEEN.

What have I done?

KING (*takes her hand*).

If it should prove but so—
And is it not already? If the full
Accumulated measure of your guilt
Become but one breath heavier—should I be
Deceived— [*Lets her hand go.*
I can subdue these last remains
Of weakness—can and will—then woe betide
Myself and you, Elizabeth!

QUEEN.

What crime
Have I committed?

KING.

On my own account then
Shall blood be shed.

QUEEN.

And has it come to this?
O Heaven!

KING.

I shall forget myself—I shall
Regard no usage and no voice of nature—
Not e'en the law of nations.

QUEEN.

O how much
I pity you!

KING.

The pity of a harlot!

INFANTA (*clinging to her mother in terror*).

The King is angry, and my mother weeps.

[KING *pushes the child violently from the* QUEEN.

QUEEN (*with mildness and dignity, but with faltering voice*).

This child I must protect from cruelty—
Come with me, daughter. [*Takes her in her arms.*
If the King no more
Acknowledge thee—beyond the Pyrenees
I'll call protectors to defend our cause. [*Going.*

KING (*embarrassed*).

Queen!

QUEEN.

I can bear no more—it is too much!

Hastening to the door, she falls with her child on the threshold.

KING (*running to her assistance*).

Heavens! What is that?

INFANTA (*cries out with terror*).

She bleeds! My mother bleeds!
[*Runs out.*

KING (*anxiously assisting her*).

O, what a fearful accident! You bleed;

Do I deserve this cruel punishment?
Rise and collect yourself—Rise, they are coming!
They will surprise us!—Shall the assembled court
Divert themselves with such a spectacle?
Must I entreat you?—Rise!

[*She rises, supported by the* KING.

SCENE X.

The former, ALVA, DOMINGO *entering alarmed, Ladies follow.*

KING.

Now let the Queen
Be led to her apartment; she's unwell.

[*Exit the* QUEEN, *attended by her ladies.* ALVA *and* DOMINGO *come forward.*

ALVA.

The Queen in tears, and blood upon her face!

KING.

Does that surprise the devils who've misled me?

ALVA *and* DOMINGO.

We?

KING.

You, who have said enough to drive me mad,
But nothing to convince me.

ALVA.

We gave you
What we ourselves possessed.

KING.

May Hell reward you!
I've done what I repent of! Ah! was hers
The language of a conscience dark with guilt?

MARQUIS POSA (*from without*)

Say, can I see the King?

SCENE XI.

The former, MARQUIS POSA.

KING (*starts up at the sound of his voice, and advances some paces to meet him*)

Ah! here he comes.—

Right welcome, Marquis! Duke! I need you now
No longer. Leave us.

[ALVA *and* DOMINGO *look at each other with silent astonishment and retire.*

SCENE XII.

The KING, *and* MARQUIS POSA.

MARQUIS.

That old soldier, Sire,
Who has faced death, in twenty battles, for you,
Must hold it thankless to be so dismiss'd.

KING.

'Tis thus for you to think—for me to act;
In a few hours, you have been more to me,
Than that man, in a life-time. Nor shall I
Keep my content a secret. On your brow
The lustre of my high and royal favour
Shall shine resplendent—I will make that man
A mark for envy, whom I choose my friend.

MARQUIS.

What if the veil of dark obscurity
Were his sole claim to merit such a title?

KING.

What come you now to tell me?

MARQUIS.

As I pass'd
Along the antechamber, a dread rumour
Fell on my ear,—it seemed incredible,—
Of a most angry quarrel—blood—the Queen——

KING.

Come you from her?

MARQUIS.

I should be horrified
Were not the rumour false: or should perhaps
Your Majesty meantime have done some act—
Discoveries of importance I have made,
Which wholly change the aspect of affairs.

KING.

How, now?

MARQUIS.

I found an opportunity
To seize your son's portfolio, with his letters,
Which, as I hope, may throw some light—

[*He gives the* PRINCE'S *portfolio to the* KING.

KING (*looks through it eagerly*).

A letter
From the Emperor, my father. How! a letter
Of which I ne'er remember to have heard.

[*He reads it through, puts it aside, and goes to the other papers*

A drawing of some fortress—detach'd thoughts
From Tacitus—and what is here? The hand
I surely recognise—it is a lady's.

[*He reads it attentively, partly to himself, and partly aloud.*

"This key—the farthest chamber of the Queen's
Pavilion!"—Ha! what's this?—"The voice of love,—
The timid lover—may—a rich reward."—
Satanic treachery! I see it now.
'Tis she—'tis her own writing!

MARQUIS.

The Queen's writing!
Impossible!—

KING.

The Princess Eboli's.

MARQUIS.

Then, it was true. what the Queen's page confess'd,
Not long since—that he brought this key and letter.

KING (*grasping the* MARQUIS'S *hand in great emotion*).

Marquis! I see that I'm in dreadful hands.
This woman—I confess it—'twas this woman
Forced the Queen's casket; and my first suspicions
Were breathed by her. Who knows how deep the priest
May be engaged in this? I am deceived
By cursed villany.

MARQUIS.

Then was it lucky—

KING.

Marquis! O Marquis! I begin to fear
I've wrong'd my wife.

MARQUIS.

If there exist, between
The Prince and Queen, some secret understandings,
They are of other import, rest assured,
Than those they charge her with. I know, for certain,
The Prince's prayer to be dispatched to Flanders,
Was by the Queen suggested.

KING.

I have thought so.

MARQUIS.

The Queen's ambitious. Dare I speak more fully?
She sees, with some resentment, her high hopes
All disappointed, and herself shut out
From share of empire. Your son's youthful ardour
Offers itself to her far-reaching views
Her heart!—I doubt if she can love.

KING.

Her schemes
Of policy can never make me tremble.

MARQUIS.

Whether the Infant loves her,—whether we
Have something worse to fear from him,—are things
Worthy our deep attention. To these points
Our strictest vigilance must be directed.

KING.

You must be pledge for him.

MARQUIS.

And if the King
Esteem me capable of such a task,
I must entreat it be entrusted to me
Wholly without conditions.

KING.

So it shall.

MARQUIS.

That in the steps which I may think required,
I may be thwarted by no coadjutors,
Whatever name they bear.

KING.

I pledge my word

You shall not. You have proved my guardian angel.
How many thanks I owe you for this service!

[LERMA *enters—the* KING *to him.*

How did you leave the Queen?

LERMA.

But scarce recover'd
From her deep swoon

[*He looks at the* MARQUIS *doubtfully, and exit.*

MARQUIS (*to the* KING, *after a pause*).

One caution yet seems needful.
The Prince may be advised of our design,
For he has many faithful friends in Ghent,
And may have partizans among the rebels.
Fear may incite to desperate resolves;
Therefore I counsel, that some speedy means
Be taken, to prevent this fatal chance

KING.

You are quite right—but how?

MARQUIS.

Your Majesty
May sign a secret warrant of arrest,
And place it in my hands, to be employed,
As may seem needful, in the hour of danger.

[*The* KING *appears thoughtful*

This step must be a most profound state-secret
Until——

KING (*going to his desk and writing the warrant of arrest*).

The kingdom is at stake, and now
The pressing danger sanctions urgent measures.
Here Marquis! I need scarcely say—use prudence.

MARQUIS (*taking the warrant*).

'Tis only for the last extremity.

KING (*laying his hand on the shoulder of the* MARQUIS).

Go! Go, dear Marquis! Give this bosom peace,
And bring back slumber to my sleepless pillow.

[*Exeunt at different sides.*

Scene XIII.

A Gallery.

Carlos *entering in extreme agitation,* Count Lerma *meeting him.*

CARLOS.

I have been seeking you.

LERMA.

And I, your Highness.

CARLOS.

For heaven's sake is it true?

LERMA.

What do you mean?

CARLOS.

That the King drew his dagger—and that she
Was borne, all bathed in blood, from the apartment?
Now answer me, by all that's sacred—say
What am I to believe? What truth is in it?

LERMA.

She fainted, and so grazed her skin in falling:
That is the whole.

CARLOS.

Is there no further danger?
Count! answer on your honour.

LERMA.

For the Queen
No farther danger—for yourself there's much!

CARLOS.

None for my mother! Then kind Heaven I thank thee
A dreadful rumour reached me, that the King
Raved against child and mother, and that some
Dire secret was discover'd.

LERMA.

And the last
May possibly be true.

CARLOS.

Be true! What mean you?

LERMA.

One warning have I given you, Prince, already,

And that to-day,—but you despised it.—now
Perhaps you'll profit better by a second.

CARLOS.

Explain yourself.

LERMA

If I mistake not, Prince,
A few days since, I noticed in your hands
An azure-blue portfolio, work'd in velvet
And chased with gold.

CARLOS (*with anxiety*).

Yes! I had such a one.

LERMA.

And on the cover—if I recollect—
A portrait set in pearls?

CARLOS.

'Tis right—go on.

LERMA.

I enter'd the King's chamber on a sudden,
And in his hands I mark'd that same portfolio,
The Marquis Posa standing by his side.

CARLOS (*after a short silence of astonishment, hastily*).

'Tis false!

LERMA (*warmly*).

Then I'm a traitor!

CARLOS (*looking stedfastly at him*).

That you are!

LERMA.

Well! I forgive you.

CARLOS (*paces the apartment in extreme agitation, at length stands still before him*).

Has he injured thee?
What have our guiltless ties of friendship done,
That with a demon's zeal thou triest to rend them?

LERMA.

Prince! I respect the grief which renders you
So far unjust.

CARLOS.

Heav'n shield me from suspicion!

LERMA.

And I remember, too, the King's own words.
Just as I enter'd, he address'd the Marquis:
"How many thanks I owe you for this news."

CARLOS.

O say no more!

LERMA.

Duke Alva is disgraced!
The great seal taken from the Prince Ruy Gomez,
And given to the Marquis.

CARLOS (*lost in deep thought*).

And from me
Has he conceal'd all this? And why from me?

LERMA.

As minister all-powerful, the court
Looks on him now—as favourite unrivall'd!

CARLOS.

He lov'd me—lov'd me greatly: I was dear,
As his own soul is, to him. That I know—
Of that I've had a thousand proofs. But should
The happiness of millions yield to one?
Must not his country dearer to him prove
Than Carlos? One friend only is too few
For his capacious heart. And not enough
Is Carlos' happiness to engross his love.
He offers me a sacrifice to virtue;
And shall I murmur at him? Now 'tis certain,
I have for ever lost him.

[*He steps aside and covers his face.*

LERMA.

Dearest Prince!
How can I serve you?

CARLOS (*without looking at him*).

Get you to the King;
Go and betray me. I have nought to give.

LERMA.

Will you then stay and brave the ill that follows?

CARLOS (*leans on a balustrade and looks forward with a vacant gaze*).

I've lost him now, and I am destitute!

LERMA (*approaching him with sympathizing emotion*).
And will you not consult your safety, Prince?

CARLOS.
My safety! Generous man!

LERMA.
And is there, then,
No other person you should tremble for?

CARLOS (*starts up*).
Heavens! you remind me now. Alas! My mother!
The letter that I gave him—first refused—
Then after gave him!

[*He paces backwards and forwards with agitation, wringing his hands.*

Has she then deserved
This blow from him? He should have spared her, Lerma.
[*In a hasty determined tone.*
But I must see her—warn her of her danger—
I must prepare her—Lerma, dearest Lerma!
Whom shall I send? Have I no friend remaining?
Yes! Heaven be praised! I still have one; and now
The worst is over. [*Exit quickly.*

LERMA (*follows, and calls after him*).
Whither, whither, Prince?

Scene XIV.

The Queen, Alva, Domingo.

ALVA.
If we may be permitted, gracious Queen——

QUEEN.
What are your wishes?

DOMINGO.
A most true regard
For your high Majesty, forbids us now
To watch in careless silence, an event
Pregnant with danger to your royal safety.

ALVA.
We hasten, by a kind and timely warning,
To counteract a plot that's laid against you.

DOMINGO.

And our warm zeal, and our best services,
To lay before your feet, most gracious Queen!

QUEEN (*looking at them with astonishment*).

Most reverend Sir, and you, my noble Duke,
You much surprise me. Such sincere attachment,
In truth, I had not hoped for from Domingo,
Nor from Duke Alva.—Much I value it.
A plot you mention, menacing my safety—
Dare I inquire by whom——

ALVA.

We must entreat
You will beware a certain Marquis Posa.
He has, of late, been secretly employ'd
In the King's service.

QUEEN.

With delight I hear
The King has made so excellent a choice.
Report, long since, has spoken of the Marquis,
As a deserving, great, and virtuous man—
The royal grace was ne'er so well bestow'd!

DOMINGO.

So well bestowed! We think far otherwise.

ALVA.

It is no secret now, for what designs
This man has been employ'd.

QUEEN.

How! What designs?
You put my expectation on the rack.

DOMINGO.

How long is it, since last your Majesty
Open'd your casket?

QUEEN.

Why do you inquire?

DOMINGO.

Did you not miss some articles of value?

QUEEN.

Why these suspicions? What I missed, was then
Known to the court! But what of Marquis Posa?
Say, what connection has all this with him?

ALVA.

The closest, please your Majesty—the Prince
Has also lost some papers of importance;
And they were seen, this morning, with the King,
After the Marquis had an audience of him.

QUEEN (*after some consideration*).

This news is strange indeed—inexplicable—
To find a foe, where I could ne'er have dream'd it,
And two warm friends, I knew not I possess'd!
[*Fixing her eyes stedfastly upon them.*
And, to speak truth, I had well nigh imputed
To you, the wicked turn my husband served me.

ALVA.

To us!

QUEEN.

To you yourselves!

DOMINGO.

To us! Duke Alva!

QUEEN (*her eyes still fastened on them*).

I am glad to be, so timely, made aware
Of my rash judgment,—else had I resolved
This very day, to beg his Majesty
Would bring me, face to face, with my accusers.
But I'm contented now. I can appeal
To the Duke Alva, for his testimony.

ALVA.

For mine? You would not sure do that!

QUEEN.

Why not?

ALVA.

'Twould counteract the services we might
Render, in secret, to you.

QUEEN.

How! in secret?
[*With stern dignity.*
I fain would know what secret projects, Duke,
Your Sovereign's spouse can have to form with you,
Or, Priest! with you—her husband should not know?
Think you that I am innocent, or guilty?

DOMINGO.

Strange question!

ALVA.

Should the Monarch prove unjust—
And, at this time——

QUEEN.

Then I must wait for justice
Until it come—and they are happiest far
Whose consciences may calmly wait their right.
[*Bows to them and exit.* DOMINGO *and* ALVA *exeunt on the opposite side.*

SCENE XV.

Chamber of PRINCESS EBOLI.

PRINCESS EBOLI. CARLOS *immediately after.*

EBOLI.

Is it then true—the strange intelligence,
That fills the Court with wonder?

CARLOS (*enters*).

Do not fear,
Princess! I shall be gentle as a child.

EBOLI.

Prince, this intrusion!

CARLOS.

Are you angry still?
Offended still with me——

EBOLI.

Prince!

CARLOS (*earnestly*).

Are you angry?
I pray you answer me.

EBOLI.

What can this mean?
You seem, Prince, to forget—what would you with me?

CARLOS (*seizing her hand with warmth*).

Dear maiden! Can you hate eternally?
Can injured love ne'er pardon?

EBOLI (*disengaging herself*).

Prince! of what
Would you remind me?

CARLOS.

Of your kindness, dearest!
And of my deep ingratitude. Alas,
Too well I know it! deeply have I wronged thee—
Wounded thy tender heart, and from thine eyes,
Thine angel eyes, wrung precious tears, sweet maid!
But ah! 'tis not repentance leads me hither.

EBOLI.

Prince! leave me—I—

CARLOS.

I come to thee, because
Thou art a maid of gentle soul—because
I trust thy heart—thy kind and tender heart.
Think, dearest maiden! think I have no friend,
No friend but thee, in all this wretched world—
Thou who wert once so kind, wilt not for ever
Hate me, nor will thine anger prove eternal.

EBOLI (*turning away her face*).

O, cease! No more! For Heaven's sake! leave me, Prince.

CARLOS.

Let me remind thee of those golden hours—
Let me remind thee of thy love, sweet maid—
That love which I so basely have offended!
O let me now appear to thee again
As once I was—and as thy heart portrayed me
Yet once again, once only, place my image,
As in days past, before thy tender soul,
And to that idol, make a sacrifice,
Thou canst not make to me.

EBOLI.

O, Carlos, cease!
Too cruelly thou sportest with my feelings!

CARLOS.

Be nobler than thy sex! Forgive an insult!
Do what no woman e'er has done before thee,
And what no woman, after thee, can equal.
I ask of thee an unexampled favour.
Grant me—upon my knees I ask it of thee—
Grant me two moments with the Queen, my mother!

[*He casts himself at her feet.*

Scene XVI.

The former. Marquis Posa *rushes in: behind him two Officers of the Queen's Guard.*

MARQUIS (*breathless and agitated, rushing between* CARLOS *and the* PRINCESS).
Say, what has he confess'd? Believe him not!

CARLOS (*still on his knees, with loud voice*).
By all that's holy——

MARQUIS (*interrupting him with vehemence*)
He is mad! He raves!
O listen to him not!

CARLOS (*louder and more urgent*).
It is a question
Of life and death, conduct me to her straight.

MARQUIS (*dragging the* PRINCESS *from him by force*).
You die, if you but listen.
[*To one of the Officers, showing an order.*
Count of Cordova!
In the King's name, Prince Carlos is your prisoner.

[Carlos *stands bewildered. The* Princess *utters a cry of horror, and tries to escape. The Officers are astounded. —A long and deep pause ensues. The* Marquis *trembles violently, and with difficulty preserves his composure.*
[*To the Prince.*
I beg your sword.—The Princess Eboli
Remains— [*To the Officers.*
And you, on peril of your lives,
Let no one with his Highness speak—no person—
Not e'en yourselves.

[*He whispers a few words to one Officer, then turns to the other.*
I hasten, instantly,
To cast myself before our Monarch's feet,
And justify this step— [*To the Prince.*
And Prince! for you—
Expect me in an hour.

[Carlos *permits himself to be led away without any signs of consciousness, except that, in passing, he casts a*

languid, dying look, on the MARQUIS. *The* PRINCESS *endeavours again to escape: the* MARQUIS *pulls her back by the arm.*

SCENE XVII.

PRINCESS EBOLI, MARQUIS POSA.

EBOLI.

For Heaven's sake let me leave this place—

MARQUIS (*leads her forward: with dreadful earnestness*).

Thou wretch!

What has he said to thee?

EBOLI.

O leave me! Nothing!

MARQUIS (*with earnestness: holding her back by force*).

How much has he imparted to thee? Here
No way is left thee to escape. To none,
In this world, shalt thou ever tell it.

EBOLI (*looking at him with terror*).

Heavens!

What would you do? Would you then murder me?

MARQUIS (*drawing a dagger*).

Yes! that is my resolve. Be speedy!

EBOLI.

Mercy!

What have I then committed?

MARQUIS (*looking towards heaven, points the dagger to her breast*).

Still there's time—
The poison has not issued from these lips.
Dash but the bowl to atoms, all remains
Still as before! The destinies of Spain
Against a woman's life!

[*Remains doubtingly in this position*

EBOLI (*having sunk down beside him, looks in his face*).

Do not delay—
Why do you hesitate? I beg no mercy—
I have deserved to die, and I am ready.

MARQUIS (*letting his hand drop slowly—after some reflection*).
It were as cowardly as barbarous,
No! God be praised!—another way is left.
[*He lets the dagger fall and hurries out. The Princess hastens out through another door.*

SCENE XVIII.

A Chamber of the Queen.

The QUEEN *to the* COUNTESS FUENTES.

What means this noisy tumult in the palace?
Each breath to-day alarms me! Countess! see
What it portends, and hasten back with speed.
[*Exit* COUNTESS FUENTES—*The* PRINCESS EBOLI *rushes in.*

SCENE XIX.

THE QUEEN, PRINCESS EBOLI.

EBOLI (*breathless, pale, and wild, falls before the* QUEEN).
Help! Help! O Queen! he's seized!

QUEEN.
Who?

EBOLI.
He's arrested,
By the King's orders given to Marquis Posa.

QUEEN.
Who is arrested? Who?

EBOLI.
The Prince!

QUEEN.
Thou rav'st!

EBOLI.
This moment they are leading him away.

QUEEN.
And who arrested him?

EBOLI.
The Marquis Posa.

QUEEN.
Then Heaven be praised, it was the Marquis seized him!

EBOLI.

Can you speak thus, and with such tranquil mien?
O Heavens! you do not know—you cannot think—

QUEEN.

The cause of his arrest!—some trifling error,
Doubtless arising from his headlong youth!

EBOLI.

No! no! I know far better. No, my Queen!
Remorseless treachery! There's no help for him.
He dies!

QUEEN.

He dies!

EBOLI.

And I'm his murderer!

QUEEN.

What! Dies? Thou ravest! Think what thou art saying?

EBOLI.

And wherefore—wherefore dies he? Had I known
That it would come to this!

QUEEN (*takes her affectionately by the hand*).

O dearest Princess,
Your senses are distracted, but collect
Your wandering spirits, and relate to me
More calmly, not in images of horror
That fright my inmost soul, whate'er you know.
Say, what has happened?

EBOLI.

O display not, Queen,
Such heavenly condescension! Like hot flames
This kindness sears my conscience. I'm not worthy
To view thy purity with eyes profane.
O crush the wretch, who, agonized by shame,
Remorse, and self-reproach, writhes at thy feet!

QUEEN.

Unhappy woman! Say, what is thy guilt?

EBOLI.

Angel of light! Sweet saint! thou little know'st
The demon, who has won thy loving smiles.
Know her to-day—I was the wretched thief
Who plunder'd thee.

QUEEN.
What! Thou?

EBOLI.
And gave thy letters
Up to the King!

QUEEN.
What! Thou?

EBOLI.
And dared accuse thee!

QUEEN.
Thou! Couldst thou this?

EBOLI.
Revenge and madness—love—
I hated thee, and loved the Prince!

QUEEN.
And did
His love so prompt thee?

EBOLI.
I had own'd my love,
But met with no return.

QUEEN (*after a pause*).
Now all's explain'd!
Rise up!—you loved him—I have pardon'd you—
I have forgotten all. Now, Princess, rise!
[*Holding out her hand to the* PRINCESS.

EBOLI.
No! no! a foul confession still remains.
I will not rise, great Queen, till I——

QUEEN.
Then speak!
What have I yet to hear?

EBOLI.
The King! Seduction!
O! now you turn away! And in your eyes
I read abhorrence. Yes: of that foul crime
I charged you with, I have myself been guilty.
[*She presses her burning face to the ground. Exit* QUEEN. —*A long pause. The* COUNTESS OLIVAREZ, *after some minutes, comes out of the Cabinet, into which the*

Queen entered, and finds the Princess *still lying in the above posture. She approaches in silence. On hearing a noise, the latter looks up and becomes like a mad person when she misses the* Queen.

Scene XX.

Princess Eboli, Countess Olivarez.

EBOLI.

Heavens! she has left me. I am now undone!

OLIVAREZ (*approaching her*)

My Princess—Eboli!

EBOLI.

I know your business,
Duchess, and you come hither from the Queen,
To speak my sentence to me—do it quickly!

OLIVAREZ.

I am commanded, by her Majesty,
To take your cross and key.

EBOLI (*takes from her breast a golden Cross, and gives it to the* Duchess).

And but once more
May I not kiss my gracious Sovereign's hand?

OLIVAREZ.

In holy Mary's convent, shall you learn
Your fate, Princess.

EBOLI (*with a flood of tears*).

Alas! then I no more
Shall ever see the Queen!

OLIVAREZ (*embraces her with her face turned away*).

Princess, farewell!

[*She goes hastily away. The* Princess *follows her as far as the door of the Cabinet, which is immediately locked after the* Duchess. *She remains a few minutes silent and motionless on her knees before it. She then rises and hastens away, covering her face.*

Scene XXI.

Queen, Marquis Posa.

QUEEN.

Ah! Marquis, I am glad you're come at last!

MARQUIS (*pale, with a disturbed countenance and trembling voice, in solemn deep agitation, during the whole Scene*).

And is your Majesty alone? Can none
Within the adjoining chamber overhear us?

QUEEN.

No one! But why? What news would you impart?
[*Looking at him closely, and drawing back alarmed.*
And what has wrought this change in you? Speak, Marquis!
You make me tremble—all your features seem
So mark'd with death!

MARQUIS.

You know, perhaps, already—

QUEEN.

That Carlos is arrested—and they add,
By you! Is it then true? From no one else
Would I believe it, but yourself.

MARQUIS.

'Tis true.

QUEEN.

By you?

MARQUIS.

By me?

QUEEN (*looks at him for some time doubtingly*).

I still respect your actions
E'en when I comprehend them not. In this,
Pardon a timid woman! I much fear
You play a dangerous game.

MARQUIS.

And I have lost it.

QUEEN.

Merciful Heaven!

MARQUIS.

Queen, fear not! He is safe,
But I am lost myself.

QUEEN.

What do I hear?

MARQUIS.

Who bade me hazard all, on one chance throw?
All? And with rash, foolhardy confidence,
Sport with the power of Heaven? Of bounded mind,

Man, who is not Omniscient, must not dare
To guide the helm of Destiny.—'Tis just!
But why these thoughts of self? The hour is precious,
As life can be to man:—and who can tell
Whether the parsimonious hand of Fate
May not have measured my last drops of life?

QUEEN.

The hand of fate! What means this solemn tone?
I understand these words not—but I shudder.

MARQUIS.

He's saved!—no matter at what price—he's saved!
But only for to-day,—a few short hours
Are his. O let him husband them!—This night
The Prince must leave Madrid.

QUEEN.

This very night?

MARQUIS.

All measures are prepared. The post will meet him
At the Carthusian Convent, which has served
So long as an asylum to our friendship.
Here will he find, in letters of exchange,
All in the world that fortune gifts me with.
Should more be wanting, you must e'en supply it
In truth, I have within my heart, full much
To unburthen to my Carlos,—it may chance
I shall want leisure now, to tell him all
In person,—but this evening you will see him,
And therefore I address myself to you.

QUEEN.

O for my peace of mind, dear Marquis, speak!
Explain yourself more clearly! Do not use
This dark, and fearful, and mysterious language!
Say, what has happened?

MARQUIS.

I have yet one thing,
A matter of importance, on my mind:
In your hands I deposit it. My lot
Was such, as few indeed have e'er enjoy'd—
I lov'd a Prince's son. My heart to one—
To that one object given—embraced the world!

I have created in my Carlos' soul,
A paradise for millions! O my dream
Was lovely!—But the will of Providence
Has summon'd me away, before my hour,
From this my beauteous work. His Roderigo
Soon shall be his no more, and friendship's claim
Will be transferr'd to love. Here, therefore, here
Upon this sacred altar—on the heart
Of his loved Queen—I lay my last bequest,
A precious legacy—he 'll find it here,
When I shall be no more.

[*He turns away, his voice choked with grief.*

QUEEN.

This is the language
Of a dying man—it surely emanates
But from your blood's excitement—or does sense
Lie hidden in your language?

MARQUIS (*has endeavoured to collect himself, and continues in a solemn voice.*)

Tell the Prince,
That he must ever bear in mind, the oath
We swore, in past enthusiastic days,
Upon the Sacred Host. I have kept mine—
I'm true to him, till death—'tis now his turn—

QUEEN.

Till death?

MARQUIS.

O bid him realize the dream,
The glowing vision which our friendship painted,
Of a new—perfect realm! And let him lay
The first hand on the rude unshapen'd stone.
Whether he fail or prosper—all alike—
Let him commence the work. When centuries
Have roll'd away, shall Providence again
Raise to the throne, a princely youth like him,
And animate again a fav'rite son,
Whose breast shall burn with like enthusiasm.
Tell him, in manhood, he must still revere
The dreams of early youth, nor ope the heart
Of Heaven's all-tender flower, to canker-worms
Of boasted reason,—nor be led astray

When, by the wisdom of the dust, he hears
Enthusiasm, heavenly-born, blasphemed.
I have already told him.—

QUEEN.

Whither, Marquis?
Whither does all this tend?

MARQUIS.

And tell him farther,
I lay upon his soul the happiness
Of man—that with my dying breath I claim,
Demand it of him—and with justest title.
I had design'd a new, a glorious morn,
To waken in these kingdoms: for to me
Philip had open'd all his inmost heart—
Call'd me his son—bestow'd his seals upon me—
And Alva was no more his counsellor.

He pauses, and looks at the QUEEN *for a few moments in silence.*

You weep!—I know those tears, beloved soul!
O they are tears of joy!—but it is past—
For ever past!—Carlos or I? The choice
Was prompt and fearful. One of us must perish!
And I will be that one. O ask no more!—

QUEEN.

Now, now, at last, I comprehend your meaning,
Unhappy man! What have you done?

MARQUIS.

Cut off
Two transient hours of evening, to secure
A long bright summer day! I now give up
The King for ever. What were I to the King?
In such cold soil, no rose of mine could bloom;
In my great friend, must Europe's fortune ripen
Spain I bequeath to him, still bathed in blood,
From Philip's iron hand. But woe to him,
Woe to us both, if I have chosen wrong!
But no—O no!—I know my Carlos better—
'Twill never come to pass!—for this my Queen,
You stand my surety. [*After a silence.*
Yes! I saw his love
In its first blossom—saw his fatal passion

Take root in his young heart. I had full power
To check it; but I did not. The attachment
Which seem'd to me not guilty, I still nourish'd.
The world may censure me, but I repent not,
Nor does my heart accuse me. I saw life
Where death appear'd to others. In a flame
So hopeless, I discern'd Hope's golden beam.
I wish'd to lead him to the excellent—
To exalt him to the highest point of beauty.
Mortality denied a model to me,
And language, words. Then did I bend his views
To this point only—and my whole endeavour
Was to explain to him his love.

QUEEN.

Your friend,
Marquis! so wholly occupied your mind,
That for his cause you quite forgot my own—
Could you suppose that I had thrown aside
All woman's weaknesses, that you could dare
Make me his angel, and confide alone
In virtue, for his armour? You forget
What risk the heart must run, when we ennoble
Passion with such a beauteous name as this

MARQUIS.

Yes, in all other women—but in one,
One only, 'tis not so.—For you, I swear it.
And should you blush t'indulge the pure desire
To call heroic virtue into life?
Can it affect King Philip, that his works
Of noblest art, in the Escurial, raise
Immortal longings in the painter's soul,
Who stands entranced before them? Do the sounds
That slumber in the lute, belong alone
To him who buys the chords? With ear unmoved
He may preserve his treasure:—he has bought
The wretched right to shiver it to atoms,
But not the power to wake its silver tones,
Or, in the magic of its sounds, dissolve.—
Truth is created for the sage, as beauty
Is for the feeling heart. They own each other.
And this belief, no coward prejudice

Shall make me e'er disclaim Then promise, Queen,
That you will ever love him. That false shame,
Or fancied dignity, shall never make you
Yield to the voice of base dissimulation:—
That you will love him still unchanged, for ever.
Promise me this, O Queen! Here solemnly
Say, do you promise?

QUEEN.

That my heart alone
Shall ever vindicate my love, I promise—

MARQUIS (*drawing his hand back*).

Now I die satisfied—my work is done.

[*He bows to the* QUEEN, *and is about to go.*

QUEEN (*follows him with her eyes in silence*).

You are then going, Marquis, and have not
Told me how soon—and when—we meet again?

MARQUIS (*comes back once more, his face turned away*)

Yes, we shall surely meet again!

QUEEN.

Now, Posa,
I understand you. Why have you done this?

MARQUIS.

Carlos, or I myself!

QUEEN.

No! no! you rush
Headlong into a deed you deem sublime.
Do not deceive yourself: I know you well:
Long have you thirsted for it. If your pride
But have its fill, what matters it to you
Though thousand hearts should break. O! now, at length,
I comprehend your feelings—'tis the love
Of admiration which has won your heart—

MARQUIS (*surprised, aside*).

No! I was not prepared for this—

QUEEN (*after a pause*).

O Marquis!
Is there no hope of preservation?

MARQUIS.

None.

QUEEN.

None? O consider well! None possible!
Not e'en by me?

MARQUIS.

None even, Queen, by thee.

QUEEN.

You but half know me—I have courage, Marquis—

MARQUIS.

I know it—

QUEEN.

And no means of safety?

MARQUIS.

None!

QUEEN (*turning away, and covering her face*).

Go! Never more shall I respect a man—

MARQUIS (*casts himself on his knees before her in evident emotion*).

O Queen! O heaven! how lovely still is life!

[*He starts up and rushes out. The* QUEEN *retires into her Cabinet.*

SCENE XXII.

DUKE ALVA *and* DOMINGO *walking up and down in silence and separately.* COUNT LERMA *comes out of the* KING'S *Cabinet, and afterwards* DON RAYMOND OF TAXIS, *the Postmaster General.*

LERMA.

Has not the Marquis yet appeared?

ALVA.

Not yet

[LERMA *about to re-enter the Cabinet.*

TAXIS (*enters*).

Count Lerma! Pray announce me to the King?

LERMA.

His Majesty cannot be seen.

TAXIS.

But say
That I must see him: that my business is

Of urgent import to his Majesty.
Make haste—it will admit of no delay.

[LERMA *enters the Cabinet.*

ALVA.

Dear Taxis, you must learn a little patience.
You cannot see the King.

TAXIS.

Not see him! Why?

ALVA.

You should have been consid'rate, and procured
Permission from the Marquis Posa first—
Who keeps both son and father in confinement

TAXIS.

The Marquis Posa! Right—that is the man
From whom I bring this letter.

ALVA.

Ha! What letter?

TAXIS.

A letter to be forwarded to Brussels.

ALVA (*attentively*)

To Brussels?

TAXIS.

And I bring it to the King.

ALVA.

Indeed! to Brussels! Heard you that, Domingo?

DOMINGO (*joining them*).

Full of suspicion!

TAXIS.

And with anxious mien,
And deep embarrassment, he gave it to me.

DOMINGO.

Embarrassment! To whom is it directed?

TAXIS.

The Prince of Orange and Nassau.

ALVA.

To William!
There's treason here, Domingo!

DOMINGO.

Nothing less!

In truth this letter must, without delay,
Be laid before the King. A noble service
You render, worthy man—to be so firm
In the discharge of duty.

TAXIS.

Reverend Sir!
'Tis but my duty.

ALVA.

But you do it well.

LERMA (*coming out of the Cabinet, addressing* TAXIS).

The King will see you. [TAXIS *goes in.*
Is the Marquis come?

DOMINGO.

He has been sought for everywhere.

ALVA.

'Tis strange!
The Prince is a state prisoner! And the King
Knows not the reason why!

DOMINGO.

He never came
To explain the business here.

ALVA.

What says the King?

LERMA.

The King spoke not a word. [*A noise in the Cabinet.*

ALVA.

What noise is that?

TAXIS (*coming out of the Cabinet*).

Count Lerma! [*Both enter.*

ALVA (*to* DOMINGO).

What so deeply can engage them

DOMINGO.

That look of fear!—This intercepted letter!
It augurs nothing good.

ALVA.

He sends for Lerma!
Yet he must know full well, that you and I
Are both in waiting.

DOMINGO.

Ah! our day is over!

ALVA.

And am I not the same, to whom these doors
Flew open once? But ah! how changed is all
Around me, and how strange!

[DOMINGO *approaches the Cabinet door softly and remains listening before it.*

ALVA (*after a pause*).

Hark!—All is still
And silent as the grave! I hear them breathe.

DOMINGO.

The double tapestry absorbs the sounds!

ALVA.

Away! there's some one coming.—All appears
So solemn and so still—as if this instant
Some deep momentous question were decided.

SCENE XXIII.

The PRINCE OF PARMA, *the* DUKES OF FERIA *and* MEDINA SIDONIA, *with other Grandees enter—the preceding.*

PARMA.

Say, can we see the King?

ALVA.

No!

PARMA.

Who is with him?

FERIA.

The Marquis Posa, doubtless?

ALVA.

Every instant
He is expected here.

PARMA.

This moment we
Arrive from Saragossa. Thro' Madrid
Terror prevails! Is the announcement true?

DOMINGO.

Alas, too true!

FERIA.

That he has been arrested
By the Marquis!

ALVA.

Yes.

PARMA.

And wherefore? What's the cause?

ALVA.

Wherefore? That no one knows, except the King
And Marquis Posa.

PARMA.

And without the warrant
Of the assembled Cortes of the Realm?

FERIA.

That man shall suffer, who has lent a hand
To infringe the nation's rights.

ALVA.

And so say I!

MEDINA SIDONIA.

And I!

THE OTHER GRANDEES.

And all of us!

ALVA.

Who'll follow me
Into the cabinet? I'll throw myself
Before the Monarch's feet.

LERMA (*rushing out of the cabinet*).

The Duke of Alva!

DOMINGO.

Then God be praised at last!

LERMA.

When Marquis Posa
Comes, say the King's engaged and he'll be sent for.

DOMINGO (*to* LERMA; *all the others having gathered round him, full of anxious expectation.*)

Count! What has happen'd? You are pale as death!

LERMA (*hastening away*).

Fell villany!

PARMA *and* FERIA.
What! what!

MEDINA SIDONIA.
How is the King?

DOMINGO (*at the same time*).
Fell villany! Explain—

LERMA.
The King shed tears!

DOMINGO.
Shed tears!

ALL (*together with astonishment*)
The King shed tears!

[*The bell rings in the Cabinet*, COUNT LERMA *hastens in.*

DOMINGO.
Count, yet one word.
Pardon!—He's gone! We're fetter'd in amazement.

SCENE XXIV.

PRINCESS EBOLI, FERIA, MEDINA SIDONIA, PARMA, DOMINGO, *and other Grandees.*

EBOLI (*hurriedly and distractedly*).
Where is the King? Where? I must speak with him.
[*To* FERIA.
Conduct me to him, Duke!

FERIA.
The Monarch is
Engaged in urgent business. No one now
Can be admitted.

EBOLI.
Has he signed, as yet,
The fatal sentence? He has been deceived.

DOMINGO (*giving her a significant look at a distance*).
The Princess Eboli!

EBOLI (*going to him*).
What! you here, Priest?
The very man I want! You can confirm
My testimony!
[*She seizes his hand and would drag him into the Cabinet.*

DOMINGO.

I? You rave Princess!

FERIA.

Hold back! The King cannot attend you now.

EBOLI.

But he must hear me—he must hear the truth!
The truth!—were he ten times a Deity!

DOMINGO.

Away! You hazard every thing! Stand back!

EBOLI.

Man! tremble at the anger of thy idol.—
I have nought left to hazard.

[*Attempts to enter the Cabinet;* ALVA *rushes out, his eyes sparkling, triumph in his gait. He hastens to* DOMINGO, *and embraces him.*

ALVA.

Let each Church
Resound with high Te Deums. Victory
At length is ours.

DOMINGO.

What!—ours?

ALVA (*to* DOMINGO *and the other Grandees*).

Now to the King.
You shall, hereafter, hear the sequel from me.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Chamber in the Royal Palace, separated from a large fore-court by an iron-barred gate. Sentinels walking up and down.

CARLOS *sitting at a table, with his hand leaning forward on his arms, as if he were asleep. In the back-ground of the Chamber are some Officers, confined with him. The* MARQUIS POSA *enters, unobserved by him, and whispers to the Officers, who immediately withdraw. He himself steps close up to* CARLOS, *and looks at him for a few minutes in silent sorrow. At last he makes a motion, which awakens him out of his stupor.*

CARLOS *rises, and seeing the* MARQUIS, *starts back. He regards him for some time with fixed eyes, and draws his hand over his forehead as if he wished to recollect something.*

MARQUIS.

Carlos! 'tis I.

CARLOS (*gives him his hand*).

Com'st thou to me again?
'Tis friendly of thee, truly.

MARQUIS.

Here, I thought
Thou mightest need a friend.

CARLOS.

Indeed! Was that
Thy real thought?—O joy unspeakable!
Right well I knew thou still wert true to me.

MARQUIS.

I have deserved this from thee.

CARLOS.

Hast thou not?
And now we understand each other fully,
It joys my heart. This kindness, this forbearance
Becomes our noble souls. For should there be
One rash, unjust demand amongst my wishes,
Wouldst thou, for that, refuse me what was just?
Virtue I know may often be severe,
But never is she cruel and inhuman.
O! it hath cost thee much—full well I know
How thy kind heart with bitter anguish bled,
As thy hands deck'd their victim for the altar!

MARQUIS.

What mean'st thou, Carlos?

CARLOS.

Thou, thyself, wilt now
Fulfil the joyous course I should have run.—
Thou wilt bestow on Spain those golden days,
She might have hoped, in vain, to win from me.
I'm lost, for ever lost—thou saw'st it clearly.—
This fatal love has scatter'd—and for ever—
All the bright early blossoms of my mind.

To all thy great exalted hopes I'm dead.
Chance led thee to the King—or Providence,—
It cost thee but my secret—and at once
He was thine own—thou may'st become his angel:
But I am lost, tho' Spain perhaps may flourish.
Well, there is nothing to condemn, if not
My own mad blindness. O, I should have known
That thou art no less great, than tender-hearted.

MARQUIS.

No! I foresaw not, I consider'd not
That friendship's generous heart, would lead thee on,
Beyond my worldly prudence. I have err'd,
My fabric's shatter'd—I forgot thy heart.

CARLOS.

Yet, if it had been possible to spare
Her fate—O how intensely I had thank'd thee!
Could I not bear the burden by myself?
And why must she be made a second victim?
But now no more, I'll spare thee this reproach.
What is the Queen to thee? Say, dost thou love her?
Could thy exalted virtue e'er consult
The petty interests of my wretched passion?
O pardon me!—I was unjust——

MARQUIS.

Thou art so!
But not for this reproach. Deserved I one,
I merit all—and then I should not stand
Before you as I do. [*He takes out his portfolio*
I have some letters
To give you back, of those you trusted to me.

CARLOS (*looks first at the letters, then at the* MARQUIS, *in astonishment*).

How!

MARQUIS.

I return them now, because they may
Prove safer in thy custody, than mine.

CARLOS.

What mean'st thou? Has his Majesty not read them?
Have they not been before him?

MARQUIS.

What, these letters!

CARLOS.

Thou didst not show them all then.

MARQUIS.

Who has said
That ever I show'd one?

CARLOS (*astonished*).

Can it be so?
Count Lerma——

MARQUIS

He! he told thee so! Now all
Is clear as day. But who could have foreseen it?
Lerma! O no, he hath not learned to lie.
'Tis true, the King has all the other letters.

CARLOS (*looks at him long with speechless astonishment*).

But wherefore am I here?

MARQUIS.

For caution's sake,
Lest thou should chance, a second time, to make
An Eboli thy confidant.

CARLOS (*as if waking from a dream*).

Ha! Now
I see it all—all is explain'd.

MARQUIS (*goes to the door*).

Who's there?

SCENE II.

DUKE ALVA.—*The former.*

ALVA (*approaching the* PRINCE *with respect, but turning his back on the* MARQUIS *during the whole scene*).

Prince, you are free. Deputed by the King,
I come to tell you so.

[CARLOS *looks at the* MARQUIS *with astonishment. General silence.*

And I, in truth,
Am fortunate, to have this honour first——

CARLOS (*looking at both with extreme amazement, after a pause to the* DUKE).

I am imprison'd, Duke, and set at freedom,
Unconscious of the cause of one, or other.

ALVA.

As far as I know, Prince, 'twas through an error,
To which the King was driven, by a traitor.

CARLOS.

Then am I here by order of the King?

ALVA.

Yes, through an error of his Majesty.

CARLOS.

That gives me pain indeed.—But when the King
Commits an error, 'twould beseem the King,
Methinks, to remedy the fault in person.
I am Don Philip's son—and curious eyes,
And slanderous looks, are on me. What the King
Hath done, from sense of duty, ne'er will I
Appear to owe to your considerate favour.
I am prepared to appear before the Cortes,
And will not take my sword from such a hand.

ALVA.

The King will never hesitate to grant
Your Highness a request so just. Permit
That I conduct you to him

CARLOS

Here I stay
Until the King, or all Madrid, shall come,
To lead me from my prison. Take my answer.

[ALVA *withdraws. He is still seen for some time lingering in the Court, and giving orders to the guards.*

SCENE III.

CARLOS *and* MARQUIS POSA.

CARLOS (*after the departure of the* DUKE, *full of expectation and astonishment, to the* MARQUIS).

What means all this?—Inform me, Roderigo—
Art thou not, then, the Minister?

MARQUIS.

I was,
As thou canst well perceive—
[*Going to him with great emotion.*
O Carlos! Now

I have succeeded—yes—it is accomplish'd—
'Tis over now—Omnipotence be praised,
To whom I owe success.

CARLOS.

Success! What mean you?
Thy words perplex me!

MARQUIS (*takes his hand*).

Carlos! thou art saved—
Art free—but I—— [*He stops short*

CARLOS.

But thou——

MARQUIS.

Thus to my breast
I press thee now, with friendship's fullest right,
A right I've bought with all I hold most dear.—
How great, how lovely, Carlos, is this moment
Of self-approving joy?

CARLOS.

What sudden change
I mark upon thy features! Proudly now
Thy bosom heaves, thine eyes dart vivid fire!

MARQUIS.

We must say farewell, Carlos! Tremble not,
But be a man! And what thou more shalt hear,
Promise me, not by unavailing sorrow,
Unworthy of great souls, to aggravate
The pangs of parting. I am lost to thee,
Carlos, for many years—fools say, for ever.

[CARLOS *withdraws his hand, but makes no reply.*
Be thou a man: I've reckon'd much on thee—
I have not even shunn'd to pass with thee
This awful hour—which men, in words of fear,
Have term'd the final one. I own it, Carlos,
I joy to pass it thus. Come, let us sit—
I feel myself grown weary and exhausted—
[*He approaches* CARLOS, *who is in a lifeless stupor, and allows himself to be involuntarily drawn down by him.*
Where art thou?—No reply!—I must be brief.
Upon the day that follow'd our last meeting

At the Carthusian Monast'ry, the King
Call'd me before him. What ensued, thou knowest,
And all Madrid. Thou hast not heard, however,
Thy secret even then had reach'd his ears—
That letters, in the Queen's possession found,
Had testified against thee. This I learn'd
From his own lips—I was his confidant.

[*He pauses for* CARLOS' *answer, but he still remains silent.*

Yes, Carlos, with my lips I broke my faith—
Guided the plot, myself, that work'd thy ruin.
Thy deed spoke trumpet-tongued; to clear thee fully
'Twas now too late: to frustrate his revenge,
Was all that now remain'd for me; and so
I made myself thy enemy to—serve thee
With fuller power—dost thou not hear me, Carlos?

CARLOS.

Go on!—go on! I hear thee.

MARQUIS.

To this point
I'm guiltless—But the unaccustom'd beams
Of royal favour dazzled me. The rumour,
As I had well foreseen, soon reach'd thine ears:
But by mistaken delicacy led,
And blinded by the vain desire, to end
My enterprise alone, I kept conceal'd
From friendship's ear, my hazardous design.
This was my fatal error! Here I fail'd!—
I know it.—My self-confidence was madness.
Pardon that confidence—'twas founded, Carlos,
Upon our friendship's everlasting base.

[*He pauses.*—CARLOS *passes from torpid silence to violent agitation.*

That which I feared, befel. Unreal dangers
Alarmed your mind.—The bleeding Queen—the tumult
Within the Palace—Lerma's interference—
And, last of all, my own mysterious silence,
Conspired to overwhelm thy heart with wonder.
Thou waverd'st, thought'st me lost; but far too noble
To doubt thy friend's integrity, thy soul
Clothed his defection with a robe of honour,
Nor judged him faithless, till it found a motive

To screen and justify his breach of faith.
Forsaken by thy only friend—'twas then
Thou sought'st the arms of Princess Eboli—
A demon's arms! 'Twas she betray'd thee, Carlos!
I saw thee fly to her—a dire foreboding
Struck on my heart—I follow'd thee, too late!
Already wert thou prostrate at her feet,
The dread avowal had escaped thy lips—
No way was left to save thee.

CARLOS.

No!—her heart
Was moved, thou dost mistake, her heart was moved

MARQUIS.

Night overspread my mind. No remedy,
No refuge, no retreat, was left to me
In nature's boundless compass. Blind despair
Transform'd me to a fury—to a tiger—
I raised my dagger to a woman's breast.
But in that moment—in that dreadful moment—
A radiant sun-beam fell upon my soul.
"Could I mislead the King! Could I succeed
In making him think me the criminal!
Howe'er improbable, the very guilt
Will be enough to win the King's belief.
I'll dare the task—a sudden thunderbolt
May make the tyrant start—what want I further?
He stops to think, and Carlos thus gains time
To fly to Brussels."

CARLOS.

And hast thou done this?

MARQUIS.

I have despatch'd a letter to Prince William,
Saying I loved the Queen, and had escaped
The King's mistrust, in the unjust suspicion
Which falsely fell on thee—that I had found
Means, through the Monarch's favour, to obtain
Free access to the Queen. I added, farther,
That I was fearful of discovery—
That thou hadst learn'd my secret, and hadst sped
To Princess Eboli, with hopes through her
To warn the Queen—that I had made thee prisoner—

And now that all seem'd lost, I had resolved
To fly to Brussels. This same letter I——

CARLOS (*interrupts him terrified*).

Hast surely not entrusted to the Post!
Thou know'st that letters to Brabant and Flanders——

MARQUIS.

Are given to the King; and as things go,
Taxis would seem to have discharged his duty.

CARLOS.

Heavens! then I'm lost.

MARQUIS.

How lost? What meanest thou?

CARLOS.

And thou, alas! art lost together with me—
This dreadful fraud my father ne'er will pardon.

MARQUIS.

This fraud! Thou'rt mad! Who will disclose it to him?

CARLOS (*regards him with a fixed look*).

Who! Dost thou ask? I will myself.

MARQUIS.

Thou ravest!

Stand back——

CARLOS.

Away! For Heaven's sake hold me not.
Whilst I stay here, he 's hiring the assassins.

MARQUIS.

Then is our time more precious—and we still
Have much to say.

CARLOS.

What! Before all is finished?

[*He makes another effort to go. The* MARQUIS *holds him by the arm, and looks at him impressively.*

MARQUIS.

Carlos! was I so scrupulous—so eager—
When thou, a boy, didst shed thy blood for me?

CARLOS (*with emotion, and full of admiration*).

Kind Providence!

MARQUIS.

Reserve thyself for Flanders!

The kingdom is thy destiny—'tis mine
To give my life for thee.

CARLOS (*takes his hand with deep sensibility*).

No, no! he will not,
Cannot resist a virtue so sublime.
I will conduct thee to him, and together,
Arm linked in arm, will we appear before him.
Then thus will I address him: "Father, see,
This is the way a friend acts towards his friend.
Trust me, 'twill move him—it will touch his heart.
He's not without humanity,—my father.
Yes, it will move him. With hot tears, his eyes
Will overflow—and he will pardon us.

[*A shot is fired through the iron grating.*—CARLOS *leaps up.*

CARLOS.

Whom was that meant for?

MARQUIS (*sinking down*).

I believe—for me.

CARLOS (*falling to the earth with a loud cry of grief*).

O God of Mercy!

MARQUIS.

He is quick—the King!—
I had hoped—a little longer—Carlos—think
Of means of flight—dost hear me?—of thy flight.
Thy mother—knows it all—I can no more. [*Dies.*

[CARLOS *remains by the Corpse, like one bereft of life After some time the* KING *enters, accompanied by many* GRANDEES; *and starts, panic-struck, at the sight. A general and deep silence. The* GRANDEES *range themselves in a semicircle round them both, and regard the* KING *and his* SON *alternately. The latter continues without any sign of life. The* KING *regards him in thoughtful silence.*

SCENE IV.

The KING, CARLOS, *the* DUKES ALVA, FERIA, *and* MEDINA SIDONIA, PRINCE OF PARMA, COUNT LERMA, DOMINGO, *and numerous Grandees.*

KING (*in a gentle tone*).

Thy prayer hath met a gracious hearing, Prince,

And here I come, with all the noble peers
Of this my Court, to bring thee liberty.

[CARLOS *raises his eyes and looks around him, like one awakened from a dream. His eyes are fixed now on the* KING, *now on the corpse; he gives no answer.*

Receive thy sword again We've been too rash!

[*He approaches him, holds out his hand, and assists him to rise.*

My son 's not in his place;—Carlos arise!
Come to thy father's arms! His love awaits thee.

CARLOS (*receives the embrace of the* KING *without any consciousness. Suddenly recollects himself, pauses and looks fixedly at him*).

Thou smell'st of blood—no, I cannot embrace thee!

[*Pushes his father back. All the Grandees are in commotion.* CARLOS *to them:*

Nay, stand not there confounded and amaz'd!
What monstrous action have I done? Defiled
The Anointed of the Lord! O fear me not,
I would not lay a hand on him. Behold
Stamp'd on his forehead is the damning brand!
The hand of God hath mark'd him!

KING (*about to go quickly*).

Nobles! follow.

CARLOS.

Whither? You stir not from this spot.

[*Detaining the* KING *forcibly with both hands, while with one he manages to seize the sword which the* KING *had brought with him, and it comes from the scabbard.*

KING.

What! Draw
A sword upon thy father?

ALL THE GRANDEES (*drawing their swords*).

Regicide!

CARLOS (*holding the* KING *firmly with one hand, the naked sword in the other*).

Put up your swords! What! Think you I am mad?
I am not so: or you were much to blame

Thus to remind me, that upon the point
Of this my sword, his trembling life doth hover.
I pray you, stand aloof; for souls like mine
Need soothing. There—hold back! And with the King,
What I have yet to settle, touches not
Your loyalty. See there—his hand is bloody!
Do you not see it? And now look you here!
[*Pointing to the corse.*
This hath he done with a well practised hand.

KING (*to the Grandees, who press anxiously round him*).
Retire! Why do you tremble? Are we not
Father and son? I will yet wait and see
To what atrocious crime his nature——

CARLOS.
Nature!
I know her not. Murder is now the word!
The bonds of all humanity are sever'd.
Thine own hands have dissolved them, through the realm.
Shall I respect a tie, which thou hast scorn'd?
O see! see here! the foulest deed of blood
That e'er the world beheld. Is there no God?
That kings, in his creation, work such havoc?
Is there no God, I ask? Since mothers' wombs
Bore children, One alone—and only One—
So guiltlessly hath died. And art thou sensible
What thou hast done? O no! he knows it not:
Knows not that he has robb'd—despoil'd the world
Of a more noble, precious, dearer life,
Than he and all his century can boast.

KING (*with a tone of softness*).
If I have been too hasty, Carlos—thou,
For whom I have thus acted, should at least
Not call me to account.

CARLOS.
Is't possible!
Did you then never guess, how dear to me
Was he, who here lies dead? Thou lifeless corse!
Instruct him—aid his wisdom, to resolve
This dark enigma now. He was my friend.

And would you know why he has perish'd thus?
He gave his life for me.

KING.

Ha! my suspicions!

CARLOS.

Pardon, thou bleeding corse, that I profane
Thy virtue, to such ears! But let him blush
With deep-felt shame,—the crafty politician.—
That his greyheaded wisdom was o'erreached
E'en by the judgment of a youth! Yes, Sire!
We two were brothers! Bound by nobler bands
Than nature ties. His whole life's bright career
Was love. His noble death was love for me.
E'en in the moment, when his brief esteem
Exalted you, he was my own. And when
With fascinating tongue, he sported with
Your haughty, giant mind, 'twas your conceit
To bridle him; but you became, yourself,
The pliant tool of his exalted plans.
That I became a prisoner—my arrest—
Was his deep friendship's meditated work.
That letter to Prince William, was design'd
To save my life. It was the first deceit
He ever practised! To ensure my safety,
He rush'd on death himself and nobly perish'd.
You lavish'd on him all your favour,—yet
For me he died. Your heart, your confidence,
You forced upon him. As a toy, he held
Your sceptre and your power,—he cast them from him,
And gave his life for me.

[*The* KING *stands motionless, with eyes fixed on the ground; all the Grandees regard him with surprise and alarm.*

How could it be
That you gave credit to his strange deceit?
Meanly indeed he valued you, to try
By such coarse artifice to win his ends!
You dared to court his friendship, but gave way
Before a test so simple. O no! never
For souls like yours, was such a being form'd!
That well he knew himself, when he rejected

Your crowns, your gifts, your greatness, and yourself.
This fine-toned lyre broke in your iron hand.
And you could do no more than murder him!

ALVA (*never having taken his eyes from the* KING, *and observing his emotion with uneasiness, approaches him with apprehension*).

Keep not this death-like silence, Sire! Look round,
And speak at least to us!

CARLOS.

Once, you were not
Indifferent to him. And deeply once,
You occupied his thoughts. It might have been
His lot, to make you happy. His full heart
Might have enriched you, with its mere abundance.
An atom of his soul, had been enough
To make a God of you. You've robb'd yourself—
Plunder'd yourself and me. What could you give,
To raise again a spirit like to this?

[*Deep silence. Many of the Grandees turn away, or conceal their faces in their mantles.*

O ye! who stand around with terror dumb,
And mute surprise, do not condemn the youth,
Who holds this language to the King, his father!
Look on this corse! Behold! for me he died.
If ye have tears—if, in your veins flows blood,
Not molten brass—look here, and blame me not.

[*He turns to the* KING *with more self-possession and calmness.*

Doubtless you wait the end of this rude scene?
Here is my sword, for you are still my King.
Think not I fear your vengeance. Murder me,
As you have murder'd this most noble man!
My life is forfeit,—that I know full well.
But what is life to me? I here renounce
All that this world can offer to my hopes.
Seek among strangers for a son. Here lies
My kingdom.

[*He sinks down on the corse, and takes no part in what follows. A confused tumult and the noise of a crowd is heard in the distance. All is deep silence*

round the KING. *His eyes scan the circle over, but no one returns his looks.*

KING.

What! Will no one make reply?
Each eye upon the ground, each look abash'd!
My sentence is pronounced. I read it here,
Proclaim'd in all this lifeless mute demeanour.
My vassals have condemn'd me.

[*Silence as before. The tumult grows louder. A murmur is heard among the Grandees. They exchange embarrassed looks.* COUNT LERMA *at length gently touches* ALVA.

LERMA.

Here 's rebellion!

ALVA (*in a low voice*).

I fear it.

LERMA.

It approaches! They are coming!

SCENE V.

An Officer of the Body Guard. The former.

OFFICER (*urgently*).

Rebellion! Where 's the King?

[*He makes his way through the crowd, up to the* KING.

Madrid 's in arms!
To thousands swell'd, the soldiery and people
Surround the palace; and reports are spread—
That Carlos is a prisoner—that his life
Is threaten'd. And the mob demand to see
Him living, or Madrid will be in flames.

THE GRANDEES (*with excitement*).

Defend the King!

ALVA (*to the* KING, *who remains quiet and unmoved*).

Fly, Sire! your life 's in danger.
As yet we know not who has arm'd the people.

KING (*rousing from his stupor, and advancing with dignity among them*).

Stands my throne firm, and am I sovereign yet,
Over this Empire? No! I'm King no more.
These cowards weep—moved by a puny boy.

They only wait the signal, to desert me.
I am betray'd by rebels!

ALVA.

Dreadful thought!

KING.

There! fling yourselves before him—down before
The young, the expectant King; I'm nothing now,
But a forsaken, old, defenceless man!

ALVA.

Spaniards! is't come to this?

[*All crowd round the* KING, *and fall on their knees before him with drawn swords.* CARLOS *remains alone with the corse, deserted by all.*

KING (*tearing off his mantle and throwing it from him*).

There! clothe him now
With this my royal mantle; and on high
Bear him, in triumph, o'er my trampled corse!

[*He falls senseless in* ALVA'S *and* LERMA'S *arms.*

LERMA.

For Heaven's sake, help!

FERIA.

O sad, disastrous chance!

LERMA.

He faints!

ALVA (*leaves the* KING *in* LERMA'S *and* FERIA'S *hands*).

Attend his Majesty! whilst I
Make it my aim to tranquillize Madrid.

[*Exit* ALVA. *The* KING *is borne off, attended by all the Grandees.*

SCENE VI.

CARLOS *remains behind with the corse.—After a few moments* LOUIS MERCADO *appears, looks cautiously round him, and stands a long time silent behind the* PRINCE, *who does not observe him.*

MERCADO.

I come, Prince, from her Majesty the Queen.

[CARLOS *turns away and makes no reply.*

My name, Mercado, I'm the Queen's physician:
See my credentials.

[*Shows the Prince a signet ring.* CARLOS *remains still silent.*

And the Queen desires
To speak with you to-day—on weighty business.

CARLOS.

Nothing is weighty in this world to me.

MERCADO.

A charge the Marquis Posa left with her.

CARLOS (*looking up quickly*).

Indeed! I come this instant.

MERCADO.

No, not yet,
Most gracious Prince! you must delay till night.
Each avenue is watch'd, the guards are doubled,
You ne'er could reach the palace unperceived;
You would endanger everything.

CARLOS.

And yet—

MERCADO.

I know one means alone that can avail us.
'Tis the Queen's thought, and she suggests it to you;
But it is bold, adventurous and strange!

CARLOS.

What is it?

MERCADO.

A report has long prevail'd,
That in the secret vaults, beneath the palace,
At midnight, shrouded in a monk's attire,
The Emperor's departed spirit walks.
The people still give credit to the tale,
And the guards watch the post, with inward terror.
Now, if you but determine to assume
This dress, you may pass freely through the guards,
Until you reach the chamber of the Queen,
Which this small key will open. Your attire
Will save you from attack. But on the spot,
Prince! your decision must be made at once.

The requisite apparel, and the mask,
Are ready in your chamber. I must haste
And take the Queen your answer.

CARLOS.

And the hour?

MERCADO.

Is midnight.

CARLOS.

Then inform her I will come.

[*Exit* MERCADO

SCENE VII.

CARLOS *and* COUNT LERMA.

LERMA

Save yourself, Prince. The King 's enraged against you.
Your liberty, if not your life 's in danger!
Ask me no farther—I have stolen away
To give you warning—fly this very instant.

CARLOS

Heaven will protect me!

LERMA.

As the Queen observed.
To me, this moment, you must leave Madrid
This very day, and fly to Brussels, Prince.
Postpone it not I pray you. The commotion
Favours your flight. The Queen, with this design,
Has raised it. No one will presume so far,
As to lay hand on you. Swift steeds await you
At the Carthusian Convent, and behold
Here are your weapons, should you be attacked.

[LERMA *gives him a dagger and pistols.*

CARLOS.

Thanks, thanks, Count Lerma!

LERMA.

This day's sad event
Has moved my inmost soul! No faithful friend
Will ever love like him. No patriot breathes
But weeps for you. More now I dare not say.

CARLOS.

Count Lerma! he who's gone, consider'd you
A man of honour.

LERMA.

Farewell, Prince, again!
Success attend you! Happier times will come—
But I shall be no more. Receive my homage!
[*Falls on one knee.*

CARLOS (*endeavours to prevent him, with much emotion*).

Not so—not so, Count! I am too much moved—
I would not be unmann'd!

LERMA (*kissing his hand with feeling*).

My children's king!
To die for you, will be their privilege!
It is not mine, alas! But in those children,
Remember me! Return in peace to Spain.
May you on Philip's throne, feel as a man,
For you have learn'd to suffer! Undertake
No bloody deed against your father, Prince!
Philip compell'd his father to yield up
The throne to him; and this same Philip now,
Trembles at his own son. Think, Prince, of that!
And may Heaven prosper and direct your path!

[*Exit quickly.* CARLOS *about to hasten away by another side, but turns rapidly round, and throws himself down before the corse, which he again folds in his arms. He then hurries from the room.*

SCENE VIII.

The King's Antechamber.

DUKE ALVA *and* DUKE FERIA *enter in conversation.*

ALVA.

The town is quieted. How is the King?

FERIA.

In the most fearful state. Within his chamber,
He is shut up, and whatsoe'er may happen,
He will admit no person to his presence.
The treason of the Marquis, has at once
Changed his whole nature. We no longer know him.

ALVA.

I must go to him, nor respect his feelings.
A great discovery which I have made——

FERIA.

A new discovery?

ALVA

A Carthusian monk
My Guards observed, with stealthy footsteps, creep
Into the Prince's chamber, and inquire
With anxious curiosity, about
The Marquis Posa's death. They seized him straight,
And question'd him. Urged by the fear of death,
He made confession, that he bore about him
Papers of high importance, which the Marquis
Enjoin'd him to deliver to the Prince,
If, before sunset, he should not return.

FERIA.

Well, and what further?

ALVA.

These same letters state
That Carlos from Madrid must fly, before
The morning dawn.

FERIA.

Indeed!

ALVA.

And that a ship at Cadiz lies
Ready for sea, to carry him to Flushing.
And that the Netherlands but wait his presence,
To shake the Spanish fetters from their arms.

FERIA.

Can this be true?

ALVA.

And other letters say,
A fleet of Soliman's will sail for Rhodes,
According to the treaty, to attack
The Spanish squadron in the Midland seas.

FERIA.

Impossible!

ALVA.

And hence, I understand
The object of the journeys, which of late

The Marquis made thro' Europe. 'Twas no less,
Than to rouse all the northern powers to arms
In aid of Flanders' freedom.

FERIA.

Was it so?

ALVA.

There is, besides, appended to these letters,
The full concerted plan of all the war,
Which is to disunite from Spain's control,
The Netherlands for ever. Nought omitted—
The power and opposition close compared;
All the resources accurately noted,
Together with the maxims to be followed,
And all the treaties which they should conclude.
The plan is fiendish, but 'tis no less splendid.

FERIA.

The deep designing traitor!

ALVA.

And, moreover,
There is allusion made, in these same letters,
To some mysterious conference, the Prince
Must with his mother hold, upon the eve
Preceding his departure.

FERIA.

That must be
This very day.

ALVA.

At midnight. But for this
I have already taken proper steps.
You see the case is pressing. Not a moment
'Tis to be lost: open the Monarch's chamber.

FERIA.

Impossible! All entrance is forbidden

ALVA.

I'll open then myself—the increasing danger
Must justify my boldness.

[*As he is on the point of approaching the door it opens. and the* KING *comes out.*

FERIA.

'Tis himself!

Scene IX.

The King. *The preceding.*

[*All are alarmed at his appearance, fall back, and let him pass through them. He appears to be in a waking dream like a sleep-walker. His dress and figure indicate the disorder caused by his late fainting. With slow steps he walks past the Grandees and looks at each with a fixed eye, but without recognising any of them. At last he stands still, wrapped in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground, till the emotions of his mind gradually express themselves in words.*

KING.

Restore me back the dead! Yes, I must have him.

DOMINGO (*whispering to* ALVA).

Speak to him, Duke.

KING.

He died despising me!
Have him again I must—and make him think
More nobly of me.

ALVA (*approaching with fear*).

Sire!

KING (*looking round the circle*).

Who speaks to me?
Have you forgotten who I am? Why not
Upon your knees, before your King, ye creatures!
Am I not still your King? I must command
Submission from you. Do you all then slight me,
Because one man despised me?

ALVA.

Gracious King!
No more of him: a new and mightier foe
Arises in the bosom of your realm.

FERIA.

Prince Carlos——

KING.

Had a friend who died for him.—
For him! With me, he might have shared an empire.—
How he look'd down upon me!—From the throne,
Kings look not down so proudly.—It was plain,
How vain his conquest made him. His keen sorrow

Confess'd how great his loss.—Man weeps not so,
For aught that's perishable. O that he might
But live again! I'd give my Indies for it!
Omnipotence! thou bring'st no comfort to me:
Thou canst not stretch thine arm into the grave,
To rectify one little act, committed
With hasty rashness, 'gainst the life of man.
The dead return no more. Who dare affirm
That I am happy? In the tomb he dwells,
Who scorn'd to flatter me. What care I now
For all who live? One spirit, one free being,
And one alone, arose in all this age!
He died despising me!

ALVA.

Our lives are useless!
Spaniards, let 's die at once! E'en in the grave
This man still robs us of our Monarch's heart.

KING (*sits down and leans his head on his arm*).

O! had he died for me! I loved him, too,
And much. Dear to me was he as a son.
In his young mind, there brightly rose for me
A new and beauteous morning. Who can say
What I had destined for him? He to me
Was a first love. All Europe may condemn me,
Europe may overwhelm me with its curse,
But I deserved his thanks.

DOMINGO.

What spell is this?

KING.

And, say, for whom did he desert me thus?
A boy,—my son? O no, believe it not!
A Posa would not perish for a boy:
The scanty flame of friendship could not fill
A Posa's heart. It beat for human kind.
His passion was the world, and the whole cour
Of future generations yet unborn.
To do them service, he secured a throne—
And lost it. Such high treason 'gainst mankind
Could Posa e'er forgive himself? O no;
I know his feelings better. Not, that he
Carlos preferred to Philip, but the youth—

The tender pupil,—to the aged Monarch.
The father's evening sunbeam could not ripen
His novel projects. He reserved for this,
The young son's orient rays. O 'tis undoubted,
They wait for my decease.

ALVA.

And of your thoughts,
Read in these letters, strongest confirmation.

KING.

'Tis possible he may miscalculate.
I'm still myself. Thanks, Nature, for thy gifts;
I feel, within my frame, the strength of youth:
I'll turn their schemes to mockery. His virtue
Shall be an empty dream—his death, a fool's.
His fall shall crush his friend and age together.
We'll test it now—how they can do without me?
The world is still, for one short evening, mine.
And this same evening, will I so employ,
That no reformer, yet to come, shall reap
Another harvest, in the waste I'll leave,
For ten long generations after me.—
He would have offer'd me a sacrifice
To his new deity—Humanity!
So on Humanity I'll take revenge.—
And with his puppet I'll at once commence.
[*To the* DUKE ALVA.
What you have now to tell me of the Prince,
Repeat. What tidings do these letters bring?

ALVA.

These letters, Sire, contain the last bequest
Of Posa to Prince Carlos.

KING (*reads the papers, watched by all present. He then lays them aside and walks in silence up and down the room*).

Summon straight
The Cardinal Inquisitor; and beg
He will bestow an hour upon the King.
This very night!

TAXIS.

Just on the stroke of two
The horses must be ready and prepared,
At the Carthusian monastery.

ALVA.

Spies
Despatch'd by me, moreover, have observed
Equipments at the convent for a journey,
On which the prince's arms were recognised.

FERIA.

And it is rumour'd that large sums are raised
In the Queen's name, among the Moorish agents,
Destined for Brussels.

KING.

Where is Carlos now?

ALVA.

With Posa's body.

KING.

Are there lights as yet
Within the Queen's apartment?

ALVA.

Every thing
Is silent there. She has dismiss'd her maids,
Far earlier than as yet has been her custom.
The Duchess of Arcos, who last was with her,
Left her in soundest sleep.

[*An Officer of the Body Guard enters, takes the* DUKE OF FERIA *aside, and whispers to him. The latter, struck with surprise, turns to* DUKE ALVA. *The others crowd round him, and a murmuring noise arises.*

FERIA, TAXIS, *and* DOMINGO (*at the same time*).

'Tis wonderful!

KING.

What is the matter?

FERIA.

News scarce credible!

DOMINGO.

Two soldiers, who have just return'd from duty,
Report—but—O the tale 's ridiculous!

KING.

What do they say?

ALVA.

They say, in the left wing

Of the Queen's palace, that the Emperor's ghost
Appear'd before them, and with solemn gait
Pass'd on. This rumour is confirm'd by all
The sentinels, who through the whole pavilion
Their watches keep. And they, moreover, add,
The phantom in the Queen's apartment vanish'd

KING.

And in what shape appeared it?

OFFICER.

In the robes,
The same attire, he in Saint Justi wore
For the last time, apparell'd as a monk.

KING.

A monk! And did the sentries know his person,
Whilst he was yet alive? They could not else
Determine that it was the Emperor.

OFFICER.

The sceptre which he bore, was evidence
It was the Emperor.

DOMINGO.

And the story goes,
He often has been seen in this same dress.

KING.

Did no one speak to him?

OFFICER.

No person dared.
The sentries pray'd, and let him pass in silence.

KING.

The phantom vanish'd in the Queen's apartments!

OFFICER.

In the Queen's antechamber. [*General silence.*

KING (*turns quickly round*).

What say you?

ALVA.

Sire! we are silent.

KING (*after some thought, to the* OFFICER).

Let my guards be ready,
And under arms, and order all approach
To that wing of the palace, to be stopp'd.
I fain would have a word with this same ghost.

[*Exit* OFFICER.—*Enter a* PAGE.

PAGE.

The Cardinal Inquisitor.

KING (*to all present*).

Retire!

[*The* CARDINAL INQUISITOR, *an old man of ninety, and blind, enters, supported on a staff, and led by two Dominicans. The Grandees fall on their knees as he passes, and touch the hem of his garment. He gives them his blessing, and they depart.*

SCENE X.

The KING *and the* GRAND INQUISITOR.

A long silence.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Say, do I stand before the King?

KING.

You do.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

I never thought it would be so again!

KING.

I now renew the scenes of early youth,
When Philip sought his sage instructor's counsel.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Your glorious sire, my pupil, Charles the Fifth,
Nor sought or needed counsel at my hands.

KING.

So much the happier he! I, Cardinal,
Am guilty of a murder, and no rest—

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What was the reason for this murder?

KING.

'Twas
A fraud unparallel'd——

GRAND INQUISITOR.

I know it all.

KING.

What do you know? Thro' whom, and since what time?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

For years—what you have only learn'd since sunset

KING (*with astonishment*).

You knew this man then!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

All his life is noted,
From its commencement, to its sudden close,
In Santa Casa's holy registers.

KING.

Yet he enjoy'd his liberty!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

The chain
With which he struggled, but which held him bound,
Tho' long, was firm, nor easy to be sever'd.

KING.

He has already been beyond the kingdom.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Where'er he travell'd I was at his side.

KING (*walks backwards and forwards in displeasure*).

You knew the hands, then, I had fallen into;
And yet delay'd to warn me!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

This rebuke
I pay you back. Why did you not consult us,
Before you sought the arms of such a man?
You knew him: one sole glance unmask'd him to you.
Why did you rob the Office of its victim?
Are we thus trifled with! When Majesty
Can stoop to such concealment, and in secret,
Behind our backs, league with our enemies,
What must our fate be then? If one be spared,
What plea can justify the fate of thousands?

KING.

But he, no less, has fallen a sacrifice.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No: he is murder'd—basely, foully murder'd.
The blood that should so gloriously have flow'd
To honour us, has stain'd the assassin's hand.
What claim had you to touch our sacred rights?
He but existed, by our hands to perish.
God gave him to this age's exigence,
To perish, as a terrible example,
And turn high vaunting reason into shame.

Such was my long-laid plan—behold, destroy'd
In one brief hour—the toil of many years.
We are defrauded, and your only gain
Is bloody hands

KING.

Passion impell'd me to it
Forgive me!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Passion! And does royal Philip
Thus answer me? Have I alone grown old?
[*Shaking his head angrily.*
Passion! Make conscience free within your realms,
If you 're a slave yourself.

KING.

In things like this
I 'm but a novice. Bear in patience with me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No, I 'm ill pleased with you—to see you thus
Tarnish the bygone glories of your reign.
Where is that Philip, whose unchanging soul,
Fix'd as the polar star, in Heaven above,
Round its own axis, still pursued its course.
Is all the memory of preceding years
For ever gone? And did the world become
New moulded, when you stretch'd your hand to *him?*
Was poison no more poison? Did distinction
'Twixt good and evil—truth and falsehood—vanish?
What then is resolution, what is firmness,
What is the faith of man, if in one weak,
Unguarded hour, the rules of three-score years
Dissolve in air, like woman's fickle favour?

KING.

I look'd into his eyes. O pardon me
This weak relapse into mortality!
The world has one less access to your heart—
Your eyes are sunk in night.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What did this man
Want with you? What new thing could he adduce,
You did not know before? And are you versed

So ill, with fanatics and innovators?
Does the Reformer's vaunting language sound
So novel to your ears? If the firm edifice
Of your conviction totters to mere words,
Should you not shudder to subscribe the fate
Of many thousand poor deluded souls,
Who mount the flaming pile, for nothing worse?

KING.

I sought a human being. These Domingos——

GRAND INQUISITOR.

How! human beings! What are they to you?
Cyphers to count withal—no more! Alas!
And must I now repeat the elements
Of kingly knowledge, to my gray-hair'd pupil?
An earthly god must learn to bear the want
Of what may be denied him. When you whine
For sympathy, is not the world your equal?
What rights should you possess above your equals?

KING (*throwing himself into a chair*).

I'm a mere suffering mortal—that I feel—
And you demand from me, a wretched creature,
What the Creator only can perform.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No, Sire! I am not thus to be deceived.
I see you through. You would escape from us
The Church's heavy chains press'd hard upon you—
You would be free, and claim your independence.
[*He pauses. The* KING *is silent.*
We are avenged. Be thankful to the Church,
That checks you, with the kindness of a mother.
The erring choice, you were allow'd to make,
Has proved your punishment. You stand reproved!
Now, you may turn to us again. And know,
If I, this day, had not been summon'd here,
By Heaven above! before to-morrow's sun,
You would, yourself, have stood at my tribunal!

KING.

Forbear this language, Priest! Restrain thyself.
I'll not endure it from thee! In such tones,
No tongue shall speak to me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Then why, O King!
Call up the ghost of Samuel?—I've anointed
Two monarchs to the throne of Spain. I hoped
To leave behind, a firm-establish'd work.
I see the fruit of all my life is lost.
Don Philip's hands have shatter'd what I built.
But tell me, Sire, wherefore have I been summon'd?
What do I here?—I am not minded, King,
To seek such interviews again.

KING.

But one—
One service more—the last—and then in peace
Depart. Let all the past be now forgotten—
Let peace be made between us. We are friends.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

When Philip bends with due humility.

KING (*after a pause*)

My son is meditating treason.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Well!
And what do you resolve?

KING.

On all, or nothing.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What mean you by this *all?*

KING.

He must escape,
Or die.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Well, Sire! decide.

KING.

And can you not
Establish some new creed to justify
The bloody murder of one's only son?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

To appease eternal justice, God's own Son
Expired upon the cross.

KING.

And can you spread
This creed throughout all Europe?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Ay, as far
As the true cross is worshipp'd.

KING.

But I sin—
Sin against nature. Canst thou, by thy power,
Silence her mighty voice.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

The voice of nature
Avails not over faith.

KING.

My right to judge
I place within your hands. Can I retrace
The step once taken?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Give him up to me!

KING.

My only son!—For whom then have I labour'd?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

For the grave rather than for liberty!

KING (*rising up*).

We are agreed. Come with me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Monarch! Whither?

KING.

From his own father's hands, to take the victim.

[*Leads him away.*

Scene XI.

Queen's Apartment.

CARLOS. *The* QUEEN. *Afterwards the* KING *and Attendants.*

CARLOS *in Monk's attire, a mask over his face, which he is just taking off: under his arm a naked sword. It is quite dark. He approaches a door, which is in the act of opening. The* QUEEN *comes out in her night-dress with a lighted candle.* CARLOS *falls on one knee before her.*

CARLOS.

Elizabeth!

QUEEN (*regarding him with silent sorrow*).

Do we thus meet again?

CARLOS.

'Tis thus we meet again! [*A silence.*

QUEEN (*endeavouring to collect herself*).

Carlos, arise!
We must not now unnerve each other thus.
The mighty dead will not be honour'd now
By fruitless tears. Tears are for petty sorrows!
He gave himself for thee! With his dear life,
He purchased thine. And shall this precious blood
Flow for a mere delusion of the brain?
O, Carlos, I have pledged myself for thee.
On that assurance, did he flee from hence
More satisfied. O do not falsify
My word.

CARLOS (*with animation*).

To him I'll raise a monument
Nobler than ever honour'd proudest Monarch,
And o'er his dust a paradise shall bloom!

QUEEN.

Thus did I hope to find thee! This was still
The mighty purpose of his death. On me
Devolves the last fulfilment of his plans,
And I will now fulfil my solemn oath.
Yet one more legacy, your dying friend
Bequeath'd to me. I pledged my word to him,
And wherefore should I now conceal it from you?
To me did he resign his Carlos—I
Defy suspicion, and no longer tremble
Before mankind, but will for once assume
The courage of a friend. My heart shall speak.
He called our passion—virtue! I believe him,
And will my heart no longer——

CARLOS.

Hold, O Queen!
Long was I sunk in a delusive dream.
I loved, but now I am at last awake:
Forgotten be the past. Here are your letters,—
Destroy my own. Fear nothing from my passion,
It is extinct. A brighter flame now burns,
And purifies my being. All my love

Lies buried in the grave.—No mortal wish
Finds place within this bosom.

[*After a pause, taking her hand.*

I have come
To bid farewell to you, and I have learn'd,
There is a higher, greater good, my mother,
Than to call thee mine own. One rapid night
Has wing'd the tardy progress of my years,
And prematurely ripen'd me to manhood.
I have no farther business in the world,
But to remember him. My harvest now
Is ended.

[*He approaches the* QUEEN, *who conceals her face.*

Mother! will you not reply?

QUEEN.

Carlos! regard not these my tears. I cannot
Restrain them. But believe me I admire you.—

CARLOS.

Thou wert the only partner of our league:
And by this name, thou shalt remain to me
The most beloved object in this world.
No other woman can my friendship share,
More than she yesterday could win my love.
But sacred shall the royal widow be,
Should Providence conduct me to the throne.

[*The* KING, *accompanied by the* GRAND INQUISITOR, *appears in the back-ground without being observed.*

I hasten to leave Spain, and never more
Shall I behold my father, in this world.
No more I love him.—Nature is extinct
Within this breast. Be you again his wife—
His son's for ever lost to him! Return
Back to your course of duty—I must speed
To liberate a people long oppress'd,
From a fell tyrant's hand. Madrid shall hail
Carlos as King, or ne'er behold him more.
And now a long and last farewell—— [*He kisses her.*

QUEEN.

O Carlos!
How you exalt me but I dare not soar

To such a height of greatness:—yet I may
Contemplate now your noble mind, with wonder.

CARLOS.

Am I not firm, Elizabeth? I hold thee
Thus in my arms and tremble not. The fear
Of instant death had, yesterday, not torn me
From this dear spot. [*He leaves her*
All that is over now,
And I defy my mortal destinies.
I've held thee in these arms and waver'd not.
Hark! Heard you nothing? [*A clock strikes.*

QUEEN.

Nothing but the bell
That tolls the moment of our separation.

CARLOS.

Good night, then, mother! And you shall, from Ghent,
Receive a letter, which will first proclaim
Our secret enterprise aloud. I go
To dare King Philip to an open contest.
Henceforth there shall be nought conceal'd between us!
You need not shun the aspect of the world.
Be this my last deceit.

About to take up the mask—the KING *stands between them.*

KING.

It is thy last!
[*The* QUEEN *falls senseless.*

CARLOS (*hastens to her and supports her in his arms*).

Is the Queen dead? Great Heavens!

KING (*coolly and quietly to the* GRAND INQUISITOR).

Lord Cardinal!
I've done *my* part. Go now, and do your own. [*Exit.*

END OF DON CARLOS.

pp. 68-69

MARY STUART:

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELIZABETH, *Queen of England.*
MARY STUART, *Queen of Scots, a Prisoner in England.*
ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
WILLIAM CECIL, *Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer.*
Earl of Kent.
SIR WILLIAM DAVISON, *Secretary of State.*
SIR AMIAS PAULET, *Keeper of* MARY.
SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, *his Nephew.*
COUNT L'AUBESPINE, *the French Ambassador.*
COUNT BELLIÈVRE, *Envoy Extraordinary from France.*
O'KELLY, *Mortimer's Friend.*
SIR DRUE DRURY, *another Keeper of* MARY.
SIR ANDREW MELVIL, *her House-Steward.*
BURGOYNE, *her Physician.*
HANNAH KENNEDY, *her Nurse.*
MARGARET CURL, *her Attendant.*
Sheriff of the County.
Officer of the Guard.
French and English Lords.
Soldiers.
Servants of State, belonging to ELIZABETH.
Servants and Female Attendants of the Queen of Scots.

MARY STUART.

ACT I.

Scene I.

A common Apartment in the Castle of Fotheringay.

Hannah Kennedy *contending violently with* Paulet, *who is about to break open a closet;* Drury *with an iron crow.*

Ken. . How now, Sir? What fresh outrage have we here?
Back from that cabinet!

Paulet. Whence came the jewel?
I know 'twas from an upper chamber thrown;
And you would bribe the gard'ner with your trinkets.
A curse on woman's wiles! In spite of all
My strict precaution and my active search,
Still treasures here, still costly gems concealed!
And doubtless there are more where this lay hid.
[*Advancing towards the cabinet.*

Ken. . Intruder, back! here lie my lady's secrets.

Paul. . Exactly what I seek. [*Drawing forth papers.*

Kennedy. Mere trifling papers;
The amusements only of an idle pen,
To cheat the dreary tedium of a dungeon.

Paul. . In idle hours the evil mind is busy.

Ken. . Those writings are in French.

Paulet. So much the worse!
That tongue betokens England's enemy.

Ken. . Sketches of letters to the Queen of England.

Paul. . I'll be their bearer. Ha! what glitters here?
[*He touches a secret spring, and draws out jewels from a private drawer.*
A royal diadem enriched with stones,
And studded with the fleur-de-lis of France!
[*He hands it to his Assistant.*

Here, take it, Drury, lay it with the rest.

[*Exit* DRURY

[And ye have found the means to hide from us
Such costly things, and screen them, until now,
From our inquiring eyes?]

KENNEDY. O insolent
And tyrant power, to which we must submit!

PAUL. . She can work ill as long as she hath treasures;
For all things turn to weapons in her hands.

KENNEDY (*supplicating*).
O Sir! be merciful; deprive us not
Of the last jewel that adorns our life!
'Tis my poor Lady's only joy to view
This symbol of her former majesty.
Your hands long since have robbed us of the rest.

PAUL. . 'Tis in safe custody; in proper time
'Twill be restored to you with scrupulous care.

KEN. . Who that beholds these naked walls could say
That Majesty dwelt here? Where is the throne?
Where the imperial canopy of state?
Must she not set her tender foot, still used
To softest treading, on the rugged ground?
With common pewter, which the lowliest dame
Would scorn, they furnish forth her homely table.

PAUL. . Thus did she treat her spouse at Stirling once;
And pledged, the while, her paramour in gold.

KEN. . Even the mirror's trifling aid withheld.

PAUL. . The contemplation of her own vain image
Incites to hope, and prompts to daring deeds.

KEN. . Books are denied her to divert her mind.

PAUL. . The Bible still is left, to mend her heart.

KEN. . Even of her very lute she is deprived!

PAUL. . Because she tuned it to her wanton airs.

KEN. . Is this a fate for her, the gentle born,
Who in her very cradle was a Queen;
Who, rear'd in Catherine's luxurious court,
Enjoyed the fulness of each earthly pleasure?
Was't not enough to rob her of her power,
Must ye then envy her its paltry tinsel?
A noble heart in time resigns itself
To great calamities with fortitude;

But yet it cuts one to the soul, to part
At once with all life's little outward trappings!

PAUL. . These are the things that turn the human heart
To vanity, which should collect itself
In penitence;—for a lewd, vicious life,
Want and abasement are the only penance.

KEN. . If youthful blood has led her into error,
With her own heart and God she must account:—
There is no judge in England over her.

PAUL. . She shall have judgment where she hath transgress'd.

KEN. . Her narrow bonds restrain her from transgression.

PAUL. . And yet she found the means to stretch her arm
Into the world, from out these narrow bonds,
And, with the torch of civil war, inflame
This realm against our Queen, (whom God preserve,)
And arm assassin bands. Did she not rouse
From out these walls the malefactor Parry,
And Babington, to the detested crime
Of regicide? And did this iron grate
Prevent her from decoying to her toils
The virtuous heart of Norfolk? Saw we not
The first, best head, in all this island fall
A sacrifice for her upon the block?
[The noble house of Howard fell with him.]
And did this sad example terrify
These mad adventurers, whose rival zeal
Plunges for her into this deep abyss?
The bloody scaffold bends beneath the weight
Of her new daily victims; and we ne'er
Shall see an end till she herself, of all
The guiltiest, be offer'd up upon it.
O! curses on the day when England took
This Helen to its hospitable arms.

KEN. . Did England then receive her hospitably?
O hapless Queen! who, since that fatal day
When first she set her foot within this realm,
And, as a suppliant—a fugitive—
Came to implore protection from her sister,
Has been condemned, despite the law of nations,
And royal privilege, to weep away
The fairest years of youth in prison walls.

And now, when she hath suffer'd every thing
Which in imprisonment is hard and bitter,
Is like a felon summoned to the bar,
Foully accused, and though herself a queen.
Constrained to plead for honour and for life.

PAUL. . She came amongst us as a murderess,
Chased by her very subjects from a throne
Which she had oft by vilest deeds disgrac'd.
Sworn against England's welfare came she hither,
To call the times of bloody Mary back,
Betray our Church to Romish tyranny,
And sell our dear-bought liberties to France.
Say, why disdain'd she to subscribe the treaty
Of Edinborough—to resign her claim
To England's crown—and with one single word,
Trac'd by her pen, throw wide her prison gates?
No:—she had rather live in vile confinement,
And see herself ill-treated, than renounce
The empty honours of her barren title.
Why acts she thus? Because she trusts to wiles,
And treacherous arts of base conspiracy;
And, hourly plotting schemes of mischief, hopes
To conquer, from her prison, all this isle.

KEN. . You mock us, Sir, and edge your cruelty
With words of bitter scorn:—that *she* should form
Such projects; *she*, who 's here immured alive,
To whom no sound of comfort, not a voice
Of friendship comes from her beloved home;
Who hath so long no human face beheld,
Save her stern gaoler's unrelenting brows;
Till now, of late, in your uncourteous cousin
She sees a second keeper, and beholds
Fresh bolts and bars around her multiplied.

PAUL. . No iron-grate is proof against her wiles.
How do I know these bars are not fil'd through?
How that this floor, these walls, that seem so strong
Without, may not be hollow from within,
And let in felon treach'ry when I sleep?
Accursed office, that's intrusted to me,
To guard this cunning mother of all ill!
Fear scares me from my sleep; and in the night

I, like a troubled spirit, roam and try
The strength of every bolt, and put to proof
Each guard's fidelity:—I see, with fear,
The dawning of each morn, which may confirm
My apprehensions:—yet, thank God, there's hope
That all my fears will soon be at an end;
For rather would I at the gates of hell
Stand sentinel, and guard the dev'lish host
Of damned souls, than this deceitful Queen.

KEN. . Here comes the Queen.

PAULET. Christ's image in her hand,
Pride, and all worldly lusts within her heart.

SCENE II.

The same. Enter MARY *veiled, a crucifix in her hand.*

KENNEDY (*hastening towards her*).
O gracious Queen! they tread us under foot;
No end of tyranny and base oppression;
Each coming day heaps fresh indignities,
New sufferings on thy royal head.

MARY. Be calm—
Say, what has happened?

KENNEDY. See! thy cabinet
Is forc'd;—thy papers,—and thy only treasure,
Which with such pains we had secur'd, the last
Poor remnant of thy bridal ornaments
From France, is in his hands:—nought now remains
Of royal state—thou art indeed bereft!

MARY. Compose yourself, my Hannah! and believe me,
'Tis not these baubles which can make a queen:—
Basely indeed they may behave to us,
But they cannot debase us. I have learnt
To use myself to many a change in England;
I can support this too. Sir, you have ta'en
By force, what I this very day designed
To have deliver'd to you. There's a letter
Amongst these papers, for my royal sister
Of England—Pledge me, Sir, your word of honour,
To give it to her majesty's own hands,
And not to the deceitful care of Burleigh.

PAUL. . I shall consider what is best to do.

MARY. Sir, you shall know its import. In this letter
I beg a favour, a great favour of her,—
That she herself will give me audience,—she!
Whom I have never seen. I have been summon'd
Before a court of men, whom I can ne'er
Acknowledge as my peers—of men to whom
My heart denies its confidence. The Queen
Is of my family, my rank, my sex;
To her alone—a sister, queen, and woman—
Can I unfold my heart.

PAULET. Too oft, my Lady,
Have you entrusted both your fate and honour
To men less worthy your esteem than these.

MARY. I, in the letter, beg another favour,
And surely nought but inhumanity
Can here reject my prayer. These many years
Have I, in prison, miss'd the church's comfort,
The blessing of the sacraments:—and she
Who robs me of my freedom and my crown,
Who seeks my very life, can never wish
To shut the gates of heaven upon my soul.

PAUL. . Whene'er you wish, the Dean shall wait upon you.

MARY (*interrupting him sharply*).
Talk to me not of Deans. I ask the aid
Of one of my own church—a Catholic priest.

PAUL. . [That is against the publish'd laws of England.

MARY. The laws of England are no rule for me.
I am not England's subject; I have ne'er
Consented to its laws, and will not bow
Before their cruel and despotic sway.
If 'tis your will, to the unheard-of rigour
Which I have borne, to add this new oppression,
I must submit to what your power ordains;—
Yet will I raise my voice in loud complaints.]
I also wish a public notary,
And secretaries, to prepare my will—
My sorrows, and my prison's wretchedness
Prey on my life—my days, I fear, are number'd—
I feel that I am near the gates of death.

PAUL. . These serious contemplations well become you.

MARY. And know I then, that some too ready hand

May not abridge this tedious work of sorrow?
I would indite my will, and make disposal
Of what belongs to me.

PAUL. . This liberty
May be allow'd to you, for England's Queen
Will not enrich herself by plundering you.

MARY. I have been parted from my faithful women,
And from my servants;—tell me, where are they?
What is their fate? I can indeed dispense
At present with their service, but my heart
Will feel rejoiced to know these faithful ones
Are not exposed to suff'ring and to want!

PAUL. . Your servants have been cared for; [and again
You shall behold whate'er is taken from you:
And all shall be restored in proper season.] [*Going.*

MARY. And will you leave my presence thus again,
And not relieve my fearful anxious heart
From the fell torments of uncertainty?
Thanks to the vigilance of your hateful spies,
I am divided from the world;—no voice
Can reach me through these prison-walls;—my fate
Lies in the hands of those who wish my ruin.
A month of dread suspense is pass'd already,
Since when the forty high commissioners
Surprised me in this castle, and erected,
With most unseemly haste, their dread tribunal;
They forced me, stunn'd, amaz'd, and unprepar'd,
Without an advocate, from memory,
Before their unexampled court, to answer
Their weighty charges artfully arranged.
—They came like ghosts—like ghosts they disappeared,
And since that day all mouths are clos'd to me.
In vain I seek to construe from your looks
Which hath prevail'd—my cause's innocence
And my friends' zeal—or my foes' cursed counsel.
O! break this silence—let me know the worst—
What I have still to fear, and what to hope.

PAUL. . Close your accounts with heaven.

MARY. From heaven I hope
For mercy, Sir;—and from my earthly judges
I hope, and still expect, the strictest justice.

PAUL. . Justice, depend upon it, will be done you.
MARY. Is the suit ended, Sir?
PAULET. I cannot tell
MARY. Am I condemn'd?
PAUL. . I cannot answer, Lady.
MARY. [Sir, a good work fears not the light of day.
PAUL. . The day will shine upon it, doubt it not.]
MARY. Despatch is here the fashion Is it meant
The murderer shall surprise me, like the judges?
PAUL. . Still entertain that thought, and he will find you
Better prepared to meet your fate than they did.
MARY (*after a pause*).
Sir, nothing can surprise me, which a court,
Inspired by Burleigh's hate and Hatton's zeal,
Howe'er unjust, may venture to pronounce:—
But I have yet to learn, how far the Queen
Will dare in execution of the sentence.
PAUL. . The sovereigns of England have no fear
But for their conscience, and their parliament.
What justice hath decreed, her fearless hand
Will execute before th' assembled world.

SCENE III.

The same. MORTIMER *enters, and without paying attention to the* QUEEN, *addresses* PAULET

MORT. Uncle, you 're sought for
[*He retires in the same manner. The* QUEEN *remarks it, and turns towards* PAULET, *who is about to follow him.*
MARY. Sir, one favour more:—
If *you* have aught to say to me—from *you*
I can bear much—I rev'rence your grey hairs—
But cannot bear that young man's insolence;—
Spare me in future his unmanner'd rudeness.
PAUL. . I prize him most for that which makes you hate him:—
He is not, truly, one of those poor fools
Who melt before a woman's treacherous tears.
He has seen much—has been to Rheims and Paris,
And brings us back his true old English heart.
Lady, your cunning arts are lost on him. [*Exit.*

Scene IV

Mary, Kennedy.

Ken. . And dares the ruffian venture to your face
Such language!—O, 'tis hard—'tis past endurance.
Mary (*lost in reflection*).
In the fair moments of our former splendour
We lent to flatt'rers a too willing ear;—
It is but just, good Hannah, we should now
Be forced to hear the bitter voice of censure.
Ken. . So downcast, so depressed, my dearest Lady!
You, who before so gay, so full of hope,
Were used to comfort me in my distress?
More gracious were the task to check your mirth
Than chide your heavy sadness.
Mary. Well I know him—
It is the bleeding Darnley's royal shade,
Rising in anger from his darksome grave:
And never will he make his peace with me
Until the measure of my woes be full.
Ken. . What thoughts are these—
Mary. Thou may'st forget it, Hannah;
But I've a faithful mem'ry—'tis this day
Another wretched anniversary
Of that regretted, that unhappy deed—
Which I must celebrate with fast and penance.
Ken. . Dismiss at length in peace this evil spirit.
The penitence of many a heavy year,
Of many a suffering, has atoned the deed:
The church, which holds the key of absolution,
Pardons the crime, and heav'n itself 's appeas'd.
Mary. This long atoned crime arises fresh
And bleeding from its lightly cover'd grave—
My husband's restless spirit seeks revenge—
No sacred bell can exorcise, no host
In priestly hands dismiss it to his tomb.
Ken. . You did not murder him—'twas done by others.
Mary. But it was known to me;—I suffer'd it,
And lured him with my smiles to death's embrace.
Ken. . Your youth extenuates your guilt. You were
Of tender years.

MARY. So tender, yet I drew
This heavy guilt upon my youthful head.
KEN. . You were provok'd by direst injuries,
And by the rude presumption of the man,
Whom out of darkness, like the hand of heav'n,
Your love drew forth, and raised above all others:
Whom through your bridal chamber you conducted
Up to your throne, and with your lovely self,
And your hereditary crown, distinguish'd:—
[Your work was his existence, and your grace
Bedew'd him like the gentle rains of heav'n.]
Could he forget, that his so splendid lot
Was the creation of your gen'rous love?
Yet did he, worthless as he was, forget it.
With base suspicions, and with brutal manners,
He wearied your affections, and became
An object to you of deserv'd disgust:—
Th' illusion, which till now had overcast
Your judgment, vanish'd; angrily you fled
His foul embrace, and gave him up to scorn.
And did he seek again to win your love?
Your favour? Did he e'er implore your pardon?
Or fall in deep repentance at your feet?
No; the base wretch defied you:—he, who was
Your bounty's creature, wish'd to play your king,
[And strove, through fear, to force your inclination.]
Before your eyes he had your fav'rite singer,
Poor Rizzio, murder'd: you did but avenge
With blood, the bloody deed——
MARY. And bloodily,
I fear, too soon 'twill be aveng'd on me:—
You seek to comfort me, and you condemn me.
KEN. . . You were, when you consented to this deed,
No more yourself—belong'd not to yourself—
The madness of a frantic love possess'd you,
And bound you to a terrible seducer,
The wretched Bothwell. That despotic man
Rul'd you with shameful, overbearing will,
And with his philters and his hellish arts
Inflamed your passions.
MARY. All the arts he used
Were man's superior strength, and woman's weakness.

KEN. . . No, no, I say. The most pernicious spirits
Of hell he must have summoned to his aid,
To cast this mist before your waking senses.
Your ear no more was open to the voice
Of friendly warning, and your eyes were shut
To decency; soft female bashfulness
Deserted you; those cheeks, which were before
The seat of virtuous blushing modesty,
Glow'd with the flames of unrestrain'd desire:
You cast away the veil of secrecy,
And the flagitious daring of the man
O'ercame your natural coyness: you expos'd
Your shame, unblushingly, to public gaze:
You let the murd'rer, whom the people follow'd
With curses, through the streets of Edinburgh,
Before you bear the royal sword of Scotland
In triumph. You begirt your parliament
With armed bands; and by this shameless farce.
There, in the very temple of great Justice,
You forc'd the judges of the land to clear
The murderer of his guilt. You went still farther—
O God!

MARY. Conclude—nay, pause not—say for this
I gave my hand in marriage at the altar.

KEN. . . O let an everlasting silence veil
That dreadful deed: the heart revolts at it,
A crime to stain the darkest criminal!
Yet you are no such lost one, that I know.
I nurs'd your youth myself—your heart is fram'd
For tender softness: 'tis alive to shame,
And all your fault is thoughtless levity.
Yes, I repeat it, there are evil spirits,
Who sudden fix in man's unguarded breast
Their fatal residence, and there delight
To act their dev'lish deeds; then hurry back
Unto their native hell, and leave behind
Remorse and horror in the poison'd bosom.
Since this misdeed, which blackens thus your life,
You have done nothing ill; your conduct has
Been pure; myself can witness your amendment.
Take courage, then; with your own heart make peace.

Whatever cause you have for penitence,
You are not guilty here. Nor England's Queen,
Nor England's parliament can be your judge.
Here *might* oppresses you: you may present
Yourself before this self-created court
With all the fortitude of innocence.

MARY. I hear a step.

KENNEDY. It is the nephew—In.

SCENE V.

The same. Enter MORTIMER, *approaching cautiously.*

MORTIMER (*to* KENNEDY).
Step to the door, and keep a careful watch,
I have important business with the Queen.

MARY (*with dignity*).
I charge thee, Hannah, go not hence—remain.

MORT. Fear not, my gracious Lady—learn to know me.
[*He gives her a card.*

MARY. [*She examines it, and starts back astonished.*
Heav'ns! What is this?

MORTIMER (*to* KENNEDY). Retire, good Kennedy;
See that my uncle comes not unawares.

MARY (*to* KENNEDY, *who hesitates, and looks at the* QUEEN *inquiringly*).
Go in; do as he bids you.
[KENNEDY *retires with signs of wonder.*

SCENE VI

MARY, MORTIMER.

MARY. From my uncle
In France—the worthy Card'nal of Lorrain?
[*She reads.*
"Confide in Mortimer, who brings you this;
You have no truer, firmer friend in England."
[*Looking at him with astonishment*
Can I believe it? Is there no delusion
To cheat my senses? Do I find a friend
So near, when I conceiv'd myself abandon'd
By the whole world? And find that friend in you,
The nephew of my gaoler, whom I thought
My most invet'rate enemy?

MORTIMER (*kneeling*). O pardon,

My gracious Liege, for the detested mask,
Which it has cost me pain enough to wear;
Yet through such means alone have I the pow'r
To see you, and to bring you help and rescue.

MARY. Arise, Sir; you astonish me; I cannot
So suddenly emerge from the abyss
Of wretchedness to hope: let me conceive
This happiness, that I may credit it.

MORT Our time is brief: each moment I expect
My uncle, whom a hated man attends:
Hear, then, before his terrible commission
Surprises you, how Heav'n prepares your rescue.

MARY. You come, in token of its wondrous pow'r.

MORT. Allow me of myself to speak.

MARY. Say on.

MORT. I scarce, my Liege, had numbered twenty years,
Train'd in the path of strictest discipline,
And nurs'd in deadliest hate to Papacy,
When led by irresistible desire
For foreign travel, I resolv'd to leave
My country and its puritanic faith
Far, far behind me: soon with rapid speed
I flew through France, and bent my eager course
On to the plains of far-famed Italy.
'Twas then the time of the great Jubilee:—
And crowds of palmers fill'd the public roads;
Each image was adorn'd with garlands; 'twas
As if all human-kind were wand'ring forth
In pilgrimage towards the heav'nly kingdom
The tide of the believing multitude
Bore me too onward with resistless force,
Into the streets of Rome. What was my wonder,
As the magnificence of stately columns
Rush'd on my sight! the vast triumphal arches,
The Colosseum's grandeur, with amazement
Struck my admiring senses; the sublime
Creative spirit held my soul a prisoner
In the fair world of wonders it had fram'd.
I ne'er had felt the power of art till now.
The Church that rear'd me hates the charms of sense;

It tolerates no image, it adores
But the unseen, the incorporeal word.
What were my feelings, then, as I approach'd
The threshold of the churches, and within,
Heard heav'nly music floating in the air:
While from the walls and high-wrought roofs there
stream'd
Crowds of celestial forms in endless train—
When the Most High, Most Glorious, pervaded
My captivated sense in real presence!
And when I saw the great and godlike visions,
The Salutation, the Nativity,
The Holy Mother, and the Trinity's
Descent, the luminous Transfiguration:
And last the holy Pontiff, clad in all
The glory of his office, bless the people!
O! what is all the pomp of gold and jewels
With which the kings of earth adorn themselves!
He is alone surrounded by the Godhead;
His mansion is in truth an heav'nly kingdom,
For not of earthly moulding are these forms!

MARY. O spare me, Sir! No further. Spread no more
Life's verdant carpet out before my eyes,
Remember I am wretched, and a prisoner.

MORT. I was a prisoner too, my Queen; but swift
My prison-gates flew open, when at once
My spirit felt its liberty, and hail'd
The smiling dawn of life. I learn'd to burst
Each narrow prejudice of education,
To crown my brows with never-fading wreaths,
And mix my joy with the rejoicing crowd.
Full many noble Scots, who saw my zeal,
Encourag'd me, and with the gallant French
They kindly led me to your princely uncle,
The Cardinal of Guise. O what a man!
How firm, how clear, how manly, and how great!
Born to control the human mind at will!
The very model of a royal priest;
A ruler of the Church without an equal!

MARY. You've seen him then,—the much lov'd, honour'd man,

Who was the guardian of my tender years!
O speak of him! Does he remember me?
Does fortune favour him? And prospers still
His life? And does he still majestic stand,
A very rock and pillar of the Church?

MORT. The holy man descended from his height,
And deign'd to teach me the important creed
Of the true Church, and dissipate my doubts.
He show'd me, how the glimm'ring light of reason
Serves but to lead us to eternal error:
That what the heart is call'd on to believe,
The eye must see: that he who rules the Church
Must needs be visible; and that the Spirit
Of truth inspir'd the Councils of the Fathers.
How vanish'd, then, the fond imaginings
And weak conceptions of my childish soul
Before his conquering judgment, and the soft
Persuasion of his tongue! So I return'd
Back to the bosom of the holy Church,
And at his feet abjur'd my heresies.

MARY. Then of those happy thousands, you are one,
Whom he, with his celestial eloquence,
Like the immortal preacher of the mount,
Has turn'd, and led to everlasting joy!

MORT. The duties of his office call'd him soon
To France, and I was sent by him to Rheims,
Where, by the Jesuits' anxious labour, priests
Are train'd to preach our holy faith in England.
There, 'mongst the Scots, I found the noble Morgan
And your true Lesley, Ross's learned bishop,
Who pass in France their joyless days of exile.
I join'd with heartfelt zeal these worthy men,
And fortified my faith. As I one day
Roam'd through the Bishop's dwelling, I was struck
With a fair female portrait; it was full
Of touching, wond'rous charms; with magic might
It mov'd my inmost soul, and there I stood
Speechless, and overmaster'd by my feelings.
"Well," cried the Bishop, "may you linger thus
In deep emotion near this lovely face!
For the most beautiful of womankind,

Is also matchless in calamity.
She is a prisoner for our holy faith,
And in your native land, alas! she suffers."
[MARY *is in great agitation.—He pauses.*

MARY. Excellent man! All is not lost, indeed,
While such a friend remains in my misfortunes!

MORT. Then he began, with moving eloquence,
To paint the suff'rings of your martyrdom;
He showed me, then, your lofty pedigree,
And your descent from Tudor's royal House.
He prov'd to me that you alone have right
To reign in England, not this upstart Queen,
The base-born fruit of an adult'rous bed,
Whom Henry's self rejected as a bastard.
[He from my eyes remov'd delusion's mist,
And taught me to lament you as a victim,
To honour you as my true Queen, whom I,
Deceiv'd, like thousands of my noble fellows,
Had ever hated as my country's foe.]
I would not trust his evidence alone;
I question'd learned doctors; I consulted
The most authentic books of heraldry;
And every man of knowledge, whom I ask'd,
Confirm'd to me your claim's validity.
And now I know that your undoubted right
To England's throne has been your only wrong.
This realm is justly yours by heritage,
In which you innocently pine as pris'ner.

MARY. O this unhappy right!—'tis this alone
Which is the source of all my sufferings.

MORT. Just at this time the tidings reached my ears,
Of your removal from old Talbot's charge,
And your committal to my uncle's care.
It seem'd to me that this disposal mark'd
The wondrous, outstretch'd hand of fav'ring Heaven:
It seem'd to be a loud decree of fate,
That it had chosen me to rescue you.
My friends concur with me; the Cardinal
Bestows on me his counsel and his blessing,
And tutors me in the hard task of feigning.
The plan in haste digested, I commenced

My journey homewards, and ten days ago
On England's shores I landed.—Oh, my Queen,
[*He pauses.*
I saw then, not your picture, but yourself—
Oh what a treasure do these walls enclose!
No prison this, but the abode of gods,
More splendid far than England's royal Court.
Happy, thrice happy he, whose envied lot
Permits to breathe the selfsame air with you!
It is a prudent policy in her
To bury you so deep! All England's youth
Would rise at once in general mutiny,
And not a sword lie quiet in its sheath:
Rebellion would uprear its giant head,
Through all this peaceful isle, if Britons once
Beheld their captive Queen.

MARY. 'Twere well with her,
If ev'ry Briton saw her with your eyes!

MORT. Were each, like me, a witness of your wrongs,
Your meekness, and the noble fortitude
With which you suffer these indignities—
Would you not then emerge from all these trials
Like a true Queen? Your prison's infamy,
Hath it despoil'd your beauty of its charms?
You are depriv'd of all that graces life,
Yet round you life and light eternal beam.
Ne'er on this threshold can I set my foot,
That my poor heart with anguish is not torn,
Not ravish'd with delight at gazing on you.
Yet fearfully the fatal time draws near,
And danger hourly growing presses on.
I can delay no longer—can no more
Conceal the dreadful news.—

MARY. My sentence then!
Is it pronounc'd? Speak freely—I can bear it.

MORT. It is pronounc'd! The two-and-forty judges
Have giv'n the verdict, "guilty;" and the Houses
Of Lords and Commons, with the citizens
Of London, eagerly and urgently
Demand the execution of the sentence:—
The Queen alone still craftily delays,

That she may be constrain'd to yield, but not
From feelings of humanity or mercy.

MARY (*collected*).

Sir, I am not surpris'd, nor terrified.
I have been long prepar'd for such a message.
Too well I know my judges. After all
Their cruel treatment I can well conceive
They dare not now restore my liberty.
I know their aim: they mean to keep me here
In everlasting bondage, and to bury,
In the sepulchral darkness of my prison,
My vengeance with me, and my rightful claims.

MORT. O! no, my gracious Queen;—they stop not there:
Oppression will not be content to do
Its work by halves:—as long as e'er you live,
Distrust and fear will haunt the English Queen
No dungeon can inter you deep enough;
Your death alone can make her throne secure.

MARY. Will she then dare, regardless of the shame,
Lay my crown'd head upon the fatal block?

MORT. She will most surely dare it, doubt it not.

MARY. And can she thus roll in the very dust,
Her own, and ev'ry monarch's majesty?

MORT. She thinks on nothing now but present danger,
Nor looks to that which is so far removed.

MARY. And fears she not the dread revenge of France?

MORT. With France she makes an everlasting peace;
And gives to Anjou's Duke her throne and hand.

MARY. Will not the King of Spain rise up in arms?

MORT. She fears not a collected world in arms,
If with her people she remain at peace.

MARY. Were this a spectacle for British eyes?

MORT. This land, my Queen, has, in these latter days,
Seen many a royal woman from the throne
Descend, and mount the scaffold:—her own mother,
And Cath'rine Howard trod this fatal path:
And was not Lady Grey a crowned head?

MARY (*after a pause*).

No, Mortimer, vain fears have blinded you;
'Tis but the honest care of your true heart,
Which conjures up these empty apprehensions.

It is not, Sir, the scaffold that I fear:
There are so many still and secret means,
By which her Majesty of England may
Set all my claims to rest. O, trust me, ere
An executioner is found for me,
Assassins will be hir'd to do their work.
'Tis that which makes me tremble, Mortimer:
I never lift the goblet to my lips
Without an inward shudd'ring, lest the draught
May have been mingled by my sister's love.

MORT. No:—neither open nor disguised murder
Shall e'er prevail against you:—fear no more;
All is prepar'd;—twelve nobles of the land
Are my confed'rates, and have pledg'd to-day,
Upon the Sacrament, their faith to free you,
With dauntless arm, from this captivity.
Count Aubespine, the French Ambassador,
Knows of our plot, and offers his assistance:
'Tis in his palace that we hold our meetings.

MARY. You make me tremble, Sir, but not for joy;
An evil boding penetrates my heart.
Know you, then, what you risk? Are you not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge?
Nor by the ruin of those many victims
Who have, in such attempts, found certain death,
And only made my chains the heavier?
Fly hence, deluded, most unhappy youth!
Fly, if there yet be time for you, before
That crafty spy, Lord Burleigh, track your schemes,
And mix his traitors in your secret plots.
Fly hence:—as yet, success hath never smil'd
On Mary Stuart's champions.

MORTIMER. I'm not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge;
Nor by the ruin of those many victims
Who have, in such attempts, found certain death:
They also found therein immortal honour,
And death, in rescuing you, is dearest bliss.

MARY. It is in vain: nor force nor guile can save me:—
My enemies are watchful, and the pow'r
Is in their hands. It is not Paulet only
And his dependent host; all England guards
My prison gates; Elizabeth's free will
Alone can open them.

MORTIMER. Expect not that.

MARY. One man alone on earth can open them.

MORT. O! let me know his name!

MARY. Lord Leicester.

MORTIMER. He!
[*Starts back in wonder.*
The Earl of Leicester! Your most bloody foe,
The fav'rite of Elizabeth!—through him—

MARY. If I am to be sav'd at all, 'twill be
Through him, and him alone. Go to him, Sir;
Freely confide in him: and, as a proof
You come from me, present this paper to him.
[*She takes a paper from her bosom;* MORTIMER *draws back, and hesitates to take it.*
It doth contain my portrait:—take it, Sir;
I've borne it long about me: but your uncle's
Close watchfulness has cut me off from all
Communication with him;—you were sent
By my good angel. [*He takes it.*

MORTIMER. O, my Queen! explain
This mystery.

MARY. Lord Leicester will resolve it:
Confide in him, and he'll confide in you.
Who comes?

KENNEDY (*entering hastily*).
'Tis Paulet; and he brings with him
A nobleman from court.

MORTIMER. It is Lord Burleigh.
Collect yourself, my Queen, and strive to hear
The news he brings, with equanimity.
[*He retires through a side door, and* KENNEDY *follows him.*

Scene VII.

Enter Lord Burleigh, *and* Paulet.

Paulet (*to* Mary).
You wish'd to-day, assurance of your fate;
My Lord of Burleigh brings it to you now:
Hear it with resignation, as beseems you.
Mary. I hope with dignity, as it becomes
My innocence, and my exalted station.
Bur. . . I come deputed from the court of justice.
Mary. Lord Burleigh lends that court his willing tongue,
Which was already guided by his spirit.
Paul. You speak as if no stranger to the sentence.
Mary. Lord Burleigh brings it; therefore do I know it
Paul. [It would become you better, Lady Stuart,
To listen less to hatred.
Mary. I but name
My enemy: I said not that I hate him.]
But to the matter, Sir.
Burleigh. You have acknowledg'd
The jurisdiction of the two-and-forty.
Mary. My Lord, excuse me, if I am oblig'd
So soon to interrupt you. I acknowledg'd,
Say you, the competence of the commission?
I never have acknowledg'd it, my Lord;
How could I so? I could not give away
My own prerogative, th' intrusted rights
Of my own people, the inheritance
Of my own son, and ev'ry monarch's honour.
[The very laws of England say I could not.]
It is enacted by the English laws,
That ev'ry one who stands arraign'd of crime
Shall plead before a jury of his equals:
Who is my equal in this high commission?
Kings only are my peers.
Burleigh. But yet you heard
The points of accusation, answer'd them
Before the court——
Mary. 'Tis true, I was deceiv'd
By Hatton's crafty counsel:—he advis'd me,
For my own honour, and in confidence

In my good cause, and my most strong defence,
To listen to the points of accusation,
And prove their falsehood. *This*, my Lord, I did
From personal respect for the lords' names,
Not their usurped charge, which I disclaim.

BUR. Acknowledge you the court, or not, that is
Only a point of mere formality,
Which cannot here arrest the course of justice.
You breathe the air of England; you enjoy
The law's protection, and its benefits;
You therefore are its subject.

MARY. Sir, I breathe
The air within an English prison walls:—
Is that to live in England; to enjoy
Protection from its laws? I scarcely know
And never have I pledg'd my faith to keep them.
I am no member of this realm; I am
An independent, and a foreign Queen.

BUR. And do you think that the mere name of Queen
Can serve you as a charter to foment
In other countries, with impunity,
This bloody discord? Where would be the state's
Security, if the stern sword of justice
Could not as freely smite the guilty brow
Of the imperial stranger, as the beggar's?

MARY. I do not wish to be exempt from judgment,
It is the judges only I disclaim.

BUR. The judges? How now, Madam! Are they then
Base wretches, snatch'd at hazard from the crowd?
Vile wranglers, that make sale of truth and justice;
Oppression's willing hirelings, and its tools?
Are they not all the foremost of this land,
Too independent to be else than honest,
And too exalted not to soar above
The fear of Kings, or base servility?
Are they not those, who rule a gen'rous people
In liberty and justice; men, whose names
I need but mention, to dispel each doubt,
Each mean suspicion which is rais'd against them?
Stands not the rev'rend Primate at their head,
The pious shepherd of his faithful people,

The learned Talbot, Keeper of the Seals,
And Howard, who commands our conqu'ring fleets?
Say, then, could England's sovereign do more
Than, out of all the monarchy, elect
The very noblest, and appoint them judges
In this great suit? And were it probable
That party hatred could corrupt *one* heart;
Can forty chosen men unite to speak
A sentence just as passion gives command?

MARY (*after a short pause*).
I am struck dumb by that tongue's eloquence,
Which ever was so ominous to me.
And how shall I, a weak, untutor'd woman,
Cope with so subtle, learn'd an orator?
Yes truly; were these lords as you describe them,
I must be mute; my cause were lost indeed,
Beyond all hope, if they pronounc'd me guilty.
But, Sir, these names, which you are pleas'd to praise,
These very men, whose weight you think will crush me,
I see performing in the history
Of these dominions, very different parts:
I see this high nobility of England,
This grave majestic senate of the realm,
Like to an eastern monarch's vilest slaves,
Flatter my uncle Henry's sultan fancies:
I see this noble rev'rend House of Lords,
Venal alike with the corrupted Commons,
Make statutes and annul them, ratify
A marriage and dissolve it, as the voice
Of power commands: to-day it disinherits,
And brands the royal daughters of the realm
With the vile name of bastards, and to-morrow
Crowns them as queens, and leads them to the throne.
I see them in four reigns, with pliant conscience,
Four times abjure their faith; renounce the Pope
With Henry, yet retain the old belief;
Reform themselves with Edward; hear the mass
Again with Mary; with Elizabeth,
Who governs now, reform themselves again.

BUR. You say you are not vers'd in England's laws,
You seem well read, methinks, in her disasters.

MARY. And these men are my judges?
[*As* LORD BURLEIGH *seems to wish to speak.*
My Lord Treas'rer,
Tow'rds you I will be just, be you but just
To me.—'Tis said, that you consult with zeal
The good of England, and of England's Queen;
Are honest, watchful, indefatigable:
I will believe it. Not your private ends,
Your Sovereign and your country's weal alone,
Inspire your counsels and direct your deeds.
Therefore, my noble Lord, you should the more
Distrust your heart; should see that you mistake not
The welfare of the government, for justice.
I do not doubt, besides yourself, there are
Among my judges many upright men:
But they are Protestants, are eager all
For England's quiet, and they sit in judgment
On me, the Queen of Scotland, and the Papist.
It is an ancient saying, that the Scots
And English to each other are unjust;
And hence the rightful custom, that a Scot
Against an Englishman, or Englishman
Against a Scot, cannot be heard in judgment.
Necessity prescrib'd this cautious law;
Deep policy oft lies in ancient customs:
My Lord, we must respect them. Nature cast
Into the ocean these two fiery nations
Upon this plank, and she divided it
Unequally, and bade them fight for it.
The narrow bed of Tweed alone divides
These daring spirits; often hath the blood
Of the contending parties dyed its waves.
Threat'ning, and sword in hand, these thousand years,
From both its banks they watch their rival's motions,
Most vigilant and true confederates,
With ev'ry en'my of the neighbour state.
No foe oppresses England, but the Scot
Becomes his firm ally; no civil war
Inflames the towns of Scotland, but the English
Add fuel to the fire: this raging hate
Will never be extinguish'd till, at last,

One parliament in concord shall unite them,
One common sceptre rule throughout the isle.

BUR. And from a Stuart, then, should England hope
This happiness?

MARY. O! why should I deny it?
Yes, I confess, I cherish'd the fond hope,
I thought myself the happy instrument
To join in freedom, 'neath the olive's shade,
Two gen'rous realms in lasting happiness!
I little thought I should become the victim
Of their old hate, their long-liv'd jealousy,
And the sad flames of that unhappy strife,
I hop'd at last to smother, and for ever:
And, as my ancestor, great Richmond, join'd
The rival roses after bloody contest,
To join in peace the Scotch and English crowns.

BUR. An evil way you took to this good end,
To set the realm on fire, and through the flames
Of civil war to strive to mount the throne.

MARY. I wish'd not that:—I wish'd it not, by Heaven!
When did I strive at that?—Where are your proofs?

BUR. I came not hither to dispute; your cause
Is no more subject to a war of words.
The great majority of forty voices
Hath found that you have contraven'd the law
Last year enacted, and have now incurr'd
Its penalty. [*Producing the verdict*

MARY. Upon this statute, then,
My Lord, is built the verdict of my judges?

BURLEIGH (*reading*).
Last year it was enacted, "If a plot
Henceforth should rise in England, in the name
Or for the benefit of any claimant
To England's crown, that justice should be done
On such pretender, and the guilty party
Be prosecuted unto death." Now, since
It has been prov'd——

MARY. Lord Burleigh, I can well
Imagine that a law expressly aim'd
At me, and fram'd to compass my destruction,
May to my prejudice be used. O! woe

To the unhappy victim, when the tongue,
That frames the law, shall execute the sentence.
Can you deny it, Sir, that this same statute
Was made for my destruction, and nought else?

BUR. It should have acted as a warning to you:
By your imprudence it became a snare.
You saw the precipice which yawn'd before you;
Yet, truly warn'd, you plung'd into the deep.
With Babington, the traitor, and his bands
Of murderous companions, were you leagued.
You knew of all, and from your prison led
Their treasonous plottings with a deep-laid plan.

MARY. When did I that, my Lord? Let them produce
The documents.

BURLEIGH. You have already seen them:
They were, before the court, presented to you.

MARY. Mere copies written by another hand;
Show me the proof that they were dictated
By me, that they proceeded from my lips,
And in those very terms in which you read them.

BUR. Before his execution, Babington
Confess'd they were the same which he receiv'd.

MARY. Why was he in his lifetime not produc'd
Before my face? Why was he then despatch'd
So quickly, that he could not be confronted
With her whom he accus'd?

BURLEIGH. Besides, my Lady,
Your secretaries, Curl and Nau, declare
On oath, they are the very selfsame letters
Which, from your lips, they faithfully transcrib'd.

MARY. And on my menials' testimony, then,
I am condemn'd; upon the word of those
Who have betray'd me, *me*, their rightful Queen!
Who in that very moment, when they came
As witnesses against me, broke their faith!

BUR. You said yourself, you held your countryman
To be an upright conscientious man.

MARY. I thought him such; but 'tis the hour of danger
Alone, which tries the virtue of a man
[He ever was an honest man, but weak
In understanding; and his subtle comrade,

Whose faith, observe, I never answer'd for,
Might easily seduce him to write down
More than he should;] the rack may have compell'd him
To say and to confess more than he knew.
He hop'd to save himself by this false witness,
And thought it could not injure *me*—a Queen.

BUR. . The oath he swore was free and unconstrain'd.

MARY. But not before my face! How now, my Lord,
The witnesses you name are still alive,
Let them appear against me, face to face!
And there repeat what they have testified!
Why am I then denied that privilege,
That right, which e'en the murderer enjoys?
I know from Talbot's mouth, my former keeper,
That in this reign a statute has been pass'd,
Which orders that the plaintiff be confronted
With the defendant; is it so, good Paulet?
I e'er have known you as an honest man,
Now prove it to me; tell me, on your conscience,
If such a law exist, or not, in England?

PAUL. . Madam, there does: that is the law in England.
I must declare the truth.

MARY. Well then, my Lord,
If I am treated by the law of England
So hardly, when that law oppresses me,
Say, why avoid this selfsame country's law,
When 'tis for my advantage? Answer me;
Why was not Babington confronted with me?
Why not my servants, who are both alive?

BUR. . Be not so hasty, Lady; 'tis not only
Your plot with Babington——

MARY. 'Tis that alone
Which arms the law against me; that alone
From which I'm call'd upon to clear myself.
Stick to the point, my Lord; evade it not.

BUR. . It has been prov'd that you have corresponded
With the Ambassador of Spain, Mendoza——

MARY. Stick to the point, my Lord.

BURLEIGH. That you have form'd
Conspiracies to overturn the fix'd
Religion of the realm; that you have call'd

Into this kingdom foreign pow'rs, and rous'd
All kings in Europe to a war with England.

MARY. And were it so, my Lord—though I deny it—
But e'en suppose it were so: I am kept
Imprison'd here against all laws of nations.
I came not into England sword in hand;
I came a suppliant; and at the hands
Of my imperial kinswoman, I claim'd
The sacred rights of hospitality.
When power seized upon me, and prepared
To rivet fetters, where I hop'd protection.
Say, is my conscience bound, then, to this realm?
What are the duties that I owe to England?
I should but exercise a sacred right,
Deriv'd from sad necessity, if I
Warr'd with these bonds, encounter'd might with might,
Roused and incited ev'ry state in Europe,
For my protection, to unite in arms.
Whatever in a rightful war is just
And loyal, 'tis my right to exercise:
Murder alone, the secret bloody deed,
My conscience and my pride alike forbid.
Murder would stain me, would dishonour me:
Dishonour me, my Lord!—but not condemn me,
Nor subject me to England's courts of law:
For 'tis not justice, but mere violence,
Which is the question 'tween myself and England

BURLEIGH (*significantly*).
Talk not, my Lady, of the dreadful right
Of pow'r: 'tis seldom on the pris'ner's side

MARY. I am the weak; she is the mighty one:
'Tis well, my Lord; let her then use her pow'r;
Let her destroy me: let me bleed, that she
May live secure: but let her then confess
That she hath exercised her pow'r alone,
And not contaminate the name of justice.
Let her not borrow, from the laws, the sword
To rid her of her hated enemy:
Let her not clothe, in this religious garb,
The bloody daring of licentious might.

Let not these juggling tricks deceive the world.—
[*Returning the sentence.*
Though she may murder me, she cannot judge me:—
Let her no longer strive to join the fruits
Of vice with virtue's fair and angel show;
But let her dare to seem the thing she is. [*Exit*

SCENE VIII.

BURLEIGH, PAULET.

BUR. She scorns us, she defies us! will defy us,
Ev'n at the scaffold's foot. This haughty heart
Is not to be subdued. Say, did the sentence
Surprise her? Did you see her shed one tear,
Or even change her colour? She disdains
To make appeal to our compassion. Well
She knows the wav'ring mind of England's Queen.
Our apprehensions make her bold.

PAULET. My Lord,
Take the pretext away which buoys it up,
And you shall see this proud defiance fail
That very moment. I must say, my Lord,
Irregularities have been allowed
In these proceedings; Babington and Ballard
Should have been brought, with her two secretaries,
Before her, face to face.

BURLEIGH. No, Paulet, no!
That was not to be risk'd; her influence
Upon the human heart is too supreme;
Too strong the female empire of her tears.
Her secretary, Curl, if brought before her,
And call'd upon to speak the weighty word
On which her life depends, would straight shrink back,
And fearfully revoke his own confession.

PAUL. Then England's enemies will fill the world
With evil rumours; and the formal pomp
Of these proceedings, to the minds of all,
Will only signalize an act of outrage.

BUR. That is the greatest torment of our Queen,
[That she can never 'scape the blame. O God!]

Had but this lovely mischief died before
She set her faithless foot on English ground.

PAUL. . Amen, say I!

BURLEIGH. Had sickness but consum'd her!

PAUL. . England had been secur'd from much misfortune.

BUR. . And yet, if she had died in nature's course,
The world would still have call'd us murderers.

PAUL. . 'Tis true, the world will think, despite of us,
Whate'er it list.

BURLEIGH. Yet could it not be prov'd?
And it would make less noise.

PAULET. Why let it make
What noise it may. It is not clam'rous blame,
'Tis righteous censure only, which can wound.

BUR. . We know that holy justice cannot 'scape
The voice of censure; and the public cry
Is ever on the side of the unhappy:
Envy pursues the laurell'd conqueror;
The sword of justice, which adorns the man,
Is hateful in a woman's hand; the world
Will give no credit to a woman's justice,
If woman be the victim. Vain that we,
The judges, spoke what conscience dictated;
She has the royal privilege of mercy;
She *must* exert it: 'twere not to be borne,
Should she let justice take its full career.

PAUL. . And therefore——

BURLEIGH. Therefore should she live? O! no,
She must not live; it must not be. 'Tis this,
Ev'n this, my friend, which so disturbs the Queen,
And scares all slumber from her couch; I read
Her soul's distracting contest in her eyes;
She fears to speak her wishes, yet her looks,
Her silent looks, significantly ask,
"Is there not one amongst my many servants
To save me from this sad alternative?
Either to tremble in eternal fear
Upon my throne, or else to sacrifice
A Queen of my own kindred on the block?"

PAUL. . 'Tis even so; nor can it be avoided—

BUR. . Well might it be avoided, thinks the Queen,
If she had only more attentive servants.
PAUL. . How more attentive?
BURLEIGH. Such as could interpret
A silent mandate.
PAULET. What? A silent mandate!
BUR. . Who, when a pois'nous adder is deliver'd
Into their hands, would keep the treach'rous charge
As if it were a sacred, precious jewel?
PAUL. . A precious jewel is the Queen's good name,
And spotless reputation: good, my Lord,
One cannot guard it with sufficient care.
BUR. . When, out of Shrewsb'ry's hand, the Queen of Scots
Was trusted to Sir Amias Paulet's care,
The meaning was——
PAULET. I hope to God, my Lord,
The meaning was, to give the weightiest charge
Into the purest hands: my Lord, my Lord!
By Heav'n, I had disdain'd this bailiff's office,
Had I not thought the service claim'd the care
Of the best man that England's realm can boast.
Let me not think I am indebted for it
To any thing but my unblemish'd name.
BUR. . Spread the report, she wastes; grows sicker still,
And sicker; and expires at last in peace;
Thus will she perish in the world's rememb'rance,
And your good name is pure.
PAULET. But not my conscience.
BUR. . Though you refuse us, Sir, your own assistance,
You will not, sure, prevent another's hand.
PAUL. . No murd'rer's foot shall e'er approach her threshold,
Whilst she's protected by my household gods.
Her life's a sacred trust; to me the head
Of Queen Elizabeth is not more sacred.
Ye are the judges; judge, and break the staff;
And when 'tis time, then let the carpenter,
With axe and saw appear to build the scaffold.
My castle's portals shall be open to him,
The sheriff and the executioners:
Till then, she is intrusted to my care;
And, be assur'd, I will fulfil my trust,
She shall nor *do*, nor *suffer* what's unjust. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

London; a Hall in the Palace of Westminster.

The EARL OF KENT *and* SIR WILLIAM DAVISON, *meeting.*

DAV. . Is that my Lord of Kent? So soon return'd?
Is then the tourney, the carousal over?
KENT. . How now? Were you not present at the tilt?
DAV. . My office kept me here.
KENT. Believe me, Sir,
You've lost the fairest show which ever taste
Devis'd, or graceful dignity perform'd:
For beauty's virgin fortress was presented,
As by *Desire* invested; the Earl Marshal,
The Lord High Admiral, and ten other knights,
Belonging to the Queen, defended it.
And France's Cavaliers led the attack.
A herald march'd before the gallant troop,
And summon'd, in a madrigal, the fortress;
And from the walls the Chancellor replied;
And then th' artillery was play'd, and nosegays,
Breathing delicious fragrance, were discharg'd
From neat field-pieces; but in vain, the storm
Was valiantly resisted, and *Desire*
Was forc'd, unwillingly, to raise the siege.
DAV. . A sign of evil boding, good, my Lord,
For the French suitors.
KENT. Why, you know that this
Was but in sport; when the attack's in earnest,
The fortress will, no doubt, capitulate.
DAV. . Ha! think you so? I never can believe it.
KENT. . The hardest article of all is now
Adjusted, and acceded to by France;
The Duke of Anjou is content to hold
His holy worship in a private chapel;
And openly he promises to honour
And to protect the realm's establish'd faith.
Had you but heard the people's joyful shouts
Where'er the tidings spread, for it has been

The country's constant fear the Queen might die,
Without immediate issue of her body;
And England bear again the Romish chains,
If Mary Stuart should ascend the throne.

DAV. . This fear appears superfluous; she goes
Into the bridal chamber; Mary Stuart
Enters the gates of death.

KENT. The Queen approaches

SCENE II.

Enter ELIZABETH, *led in by* LEICESTER, COUNT AUBESPINE, BELLIEVRE, LORDS SHREWSBURY *and* BURLEIGH, *with other French and English Gentlemen.*

ELIZABETH (*to* AUBESPINE).

Count, I am sorry for these noblemen,
Whose gallant zeal hath brought them over sea
To visit these our shores, that they, with us,
Must miss the splendour of St. Germain's court.
Such pompous festivals of godlike state
I cannot furnish, as the royal court
Of France. A sober and contented people,
Which crowd around me with a thousand blessings,
Whene'er in public I present myself:
This is the spectacle which I can show,
And not without some pride, to foreign eyes.
The splendour of the noble dames who bloom
In Cath'rine's beauteous garden would, I know
Eclipse myself, and my more modest merits.

AUB. . The court of England has one lady only,
To show the wond'ring foreigner; but all
That charms our hearts in the accomplish'd sex,
Is seen united in her single person.

BEL. . Great Majesty of England, suffer us
To take our leave, and to our royal master,
The Duke of Anjou, bring the happy news.
The hot impatience of his heart would not
Permit him to remain at Paris; he
At Amiens awaits the joyful tidings;
And thence to Calais reach his posts, to bring

With winged swiftness to his tranced ear
The sweet consent which, still we humbly hope,
Your royal lips will graciously pronounce.

ELIZ. . Press me no further now, Count Bellievre,
It is not now a time, I must repeat,
To kindle here the joyful marriage torch.
The heav'ns low'r black and heavy o'er this land;
And weeds of mourning would become me better
Than the magnificence of bridal robes.
A fatal blow is aim'd against my heart;
A blow which threatens to oppress my House.

BEL. . We only ask your Majesty to promise
Your royal hand when brighter days shall come.

ELIZ. . Monarchs are but the slaves of their condition;
They dare not hear the dictates of their hearts:
My wish was ever to remain unmarried,
And I had plac'd my greatest pride in this,
That men hereafter on my tomb might read
"Here rests the virgin Queen." But my good subjects
Are not content that this should be: they think,
E'en now they often think, upon the time
When I shall be no more. 'Tis not enough
That blessings now are shower'd upon this land;
They ask a sacrifice for future welfare,
And I must offer up my liberty,
My virgin liberty, my greatest good,
To satisfy my people. Thus they'd force
A lord and master on me. 'Tis by this
I see that I am nothing but a woman
In their regard; and yet methought that I
Had govern'd like a man, and like a king.
Well wot I that it is not serving God,
To quit the laws of nature; and that those
Who here have rul'd before me merit praise,
That they have op'd the cloister gates, and giv'n
Thousands of victims of ill-taught devotion,
Back to the duties of humanity.
But yet a Queen, who hath not spent her days
In fruitless, idle contemplation; who,
Without a murmur, indefatigably,
Performs the hardest of all duties; *she*

Should be exempted, from that natural law
Which doth ordain one half of human kind
Shall ever be subservient to the other.

AUB. . Great Queen, you have upon your throne done honour
To ev'ry virtue; nothing now remains,
But to the sex, whose greatest boast you are,
To be the leading star, and give the great
Example of its most consistent duties.
'Tis true, the man exists not who deserves
That you to him should sacrifice your freedom;
Yet if a hero's soul, descent, and rank,
And manly beauty can make mortal man
Deserving of this honour—

ELIZABETH. Without doubt,
My Lord Ambassador, a marriage union
With France's royal son would do me honour:
Yes, I acknowledge it without disguise,
If it must be, if I cannot prevent it,
If I must yield unto my people's prayers,
And much I fear they will o'erpower me,
I do not know, in Europe, any prince
To whom with less reluctance I would yield
My greatest treasure, my dear liberty.
Let this confession satisfy your master.

BEL. . It gives the *fairest* hope, and yet it gives
Nothing *but* hope; my master wishes more.

ELIZ. . What wishes he?

[*She takes a ring from her finger, and thoughtfully examines it.*

In this a Queen has not
One privilege above all other women.
This common token marks one common duty,
One common servitude; the ring denotes
Marriage; and 'tis of rings a chain is form'd.
Convey this present to his Highness; 'tis
As yet no chain, it binds me not as yet.
But out of it may grow a link to bind me.

BELLIEVRE (*kneeling*).
This present, in his name, upon my knees,
I do receive, great Queen, and press the kiss

Of homage on the hand of her who is
Henceforth my princess.

ELIZABETH (*to the* EARL OF LEICESTER, *whom she, during the last speeches, had continually regarded*).
By your leave, my Lord.
[*She takes the blue riband from his neck*, and invests Bellievre with it.*
Invest his Highness with this ornament,
As I invest you with it, and receive you
Into the duties of my gallant order.
And, "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Thus perish
All jealousy between our several realms,
And let the bond of confidence unite,
Henceforth, the crowns of Britain and of France.

BEL. Most sov'reign Queen, this is a day of joy;
O that it could be so for all, and no
Afflicted heart within this island mourn.
See! mercy beams upon thy radiant brow;
Let the reflection of its cheering light
Fall on a wretched princess, who concerns
Britain and France alike.

ELIZABETH. No further, Count!
Let us not mix two inconsistent things;
If France be truly anxious for my hand,
It must partake my interests, and renounce
Alliance with my foes.

AUBESPINE. In thine own eyes
Would she not seem to act unworthily,
If in this joyous treaty, she forgot
This hapless Queen, the widow of her king;
In whose behalf, her honour and her faith
Are bound to plead for grace.

ELIZABETH. Thus urged, I know
To rate this intercession at its worth;
France has discharged her duties as a friend,
I will fulfil my own as England's Queen.
[*She bows to the French Ambassadors, who, with the other Gentlemen, retire respectfully.*

* Till the time of Charles the First, the Knights of the Garter wore the

SCENE III.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* TALBOT. *The* QUEEN *takes her seat.*

BUR. . Illustrious sovereign, thou crown'st to day
The fervent wishes of thy people: now
We can rejoice in the propitious days
Which thou bestow'st upon us; and we look
No more with fear and trembling tow'rds the time
Which, charg'd with storms, futurity presented.
Now, but one only care disturbs this land;
It is a sacrifice which every voice
Demands; O! grant but this, and England's peace
Will be establish'd now and evermore.

ELIZ. . What wish they still, my Lord? Speak.

BURLEIGH. They demand
The Stuart's head. If to thy people thou
Wouldst now secure the precious boon of freedom,
And the fair light of truth so dearly won,
Then she must die: if we are not to live
In endless terror for thy precious life,
The enemy must fall: for well thou know'st,
That all thy Britons are not true alike:
Romish idolatry has still its friends
In secret, in this island, who foment
The hatred of our enemies. Their hearts
All turn towards this Stuart; they are leagu'd
With the two plotting brothers of Lorrain,
The foes invet'rate of thy house and name.
'Gainst thee this raging faction hath declar'd
A war of desolation, which they wage
With the deceitful instruments of hell.
At Rheims, the Cardinal Archbishop's see,
There is the arsenal, from which they dart
These lightnings; *there* the school of regicide;
Thence, in a thousand shapes disguis'd, are sent
Their secret missionaries to this isle;

blue riband with the George, about their necks, as they still do the collars, on great days.—TRANSLATOR.

Their bold and daring zealots; for from *thence*,
Have we not seen the third assassin come?
And inexhausted is the direful breed
Of secret enemies in *this* abyss.
While in her castle sits, at Fotheringay,
The *Até* * of this everlasting war,
Who, with the torch of love, spreads flames around;
For her who sheds delusive hopes on all,
Youth dedicates itself to certain death;
To set her free is the pretence—the aim
Is to establish her upon the throne.
For this accursed House of Guise denies
Thy sacred right; and in their mouths thou art
A robber of the throne, whom chance has crown'd.
By them this thoughtless woman was deluded,
Proudly to style herself the Queen of England:
No peace can be with her, and with her house;
[Their hatred is too bloody, and their crimes
Too great;] thou must resolve to strike, or suffer;—
Her life is death to thee, her death thy life.

ELIZ. . My Lord, you bear a melancholy office:
I know the purity which guides your zeal,
The solid wisdom which informs your speech:
And yet I hate this wisdom, when it calls
For blood, I hate it in my inmost soul.
Think of a milder counsel—Good, my Lord
Of Shrewsbury, we crave your judgment here.

TAL. . [Desire you but to know, most gracious Queen,]

* The picture of Até, the Goddess of mischief, we are acquainted with from Homer, Il. v. 91. 130. I. 501. She is a daughter of Jupiter, and eager to prejudice every one, even the immortal gods. She counteracted Jupiter himself, on which account he seized her by her beautiful hair, and hurled her from heaven to the earth, where she now, striding over the heads of men, excites them to evil, in order to involve them in calamity.—HERDER.

Shakspere has, in Julius Cæsar, made a fine use of this image:—

"And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Até by his side, come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice,
Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war."

I need not point out to the reader, the beautiful propriety of introducing this evil spirit on this occasion.—TRANSLATOR.

[What is for your advantage, I can add
Nothing to what my Lord High Treasurer
Has urged; then, for your welfare, let the sentence
Be now confirm'd—this much is prov'd already:
There is no surer method to avert
The danger from your head, and from the state.
Should you in this reject our true advice,
You can dismiss your council. We are plac'd
Here as your counsellors, but to consult
The welfare of this land, and with our knowledge.
And our experience, we are bound to serve you!
But in what 's good and just, most gracious Queen,
You have no need of counsellors, your conscience
Knows it full well, and it is written there.
Nay it were overstepping our commission
If we attempted to instruct you in it.

ELIZ. . Yet speak, my worthy Lord of Shrewsbury,
'Tis not our understanding fails alone,
Our heart too feels it wants some sage advice.]

TAL. . Well did you praise the upright zeal which fires
Lord Burleigh's loyal breast; my bosom too,
Although my tongue be not so eloquent,
Beats with no weaker, no less faithful pulse.
Long may you live, my Queen, to be the joy
Of your delighted people, to prolong
Peace and its envied blessings in this realm.
Ne'er hath this isle beheld such happy days
Since it was govern'd by its native kings.
O let it never buy its happiness
With its good name; at least, may Talbot's eyes
Be clos'd in death, e'er this shall come to pass.

ELIZ. . Forbid it, Heaven, that our good name be stain'd!

TAL. . Then must you find some other way than this
To save thy kingdom, for the sentence pass'd
Of death against the Stuart is unjust.
You cannot upon her pronounce a sentence,
Who is not subject to you.

ELIZABETH. Then, it seems,
My council and my parliament have err'd;
Each bench of justice in the land is wrong,
Which did, with one accord, admit this right.

TALBOT (*after a pause*).
The proof of justice lies not in the voice
Of numbers; England 's not the world, nor is
Thy parliament the focus, which collects
The vast opinion of the human race.
This present England is no more the future,
Than 'tis the past; as inclination changes,
Thus ever ebbs and flows the unstable tide
Of public judgment. Say not then, that thou
Must act as stern necessity compels,
That thou must yield to the importunate
Petitions of thy people; ev'ry hour
Thou canst experience that thy will is free.
Make trial, and declare, thou hatest blood,
And that thou wilt protect thy sister's life;
Show those who wish to give thee other counsels,
That *here* thy royal anger is not feign'd,
And thou shalt see how stern necessity
Can vanish, and what once was titled justice
Into injustice be converted: thou
Thyself must pass the sentence, thou alone:—
Trust not to this unsteady, trembling reed,
But hear the gracious dictates of thy heart.
God hath not planted rigour in the frame
Of woman; and the founders of this realm,
Who to the female hand have not denied
The reins of government, intend by this
To show that mercy, not severity,
Is the best virtue to adorn a crown.
ELIZ. . Lord Shrewsb'ry is a fervent advocate
For mine, and England's enemy; I must
Prefer those counsellors who wish *my* welfare.
TAL. . . Her advocates have an invidious task!
None will, by speaking in her favour, dare
To meet thy anger: suffer, then, an old
And faithful counsellor (whom nought on earth
Can tempt, on the grave's brink) to exercise
The pious duty of humanity.
It never shall be said, that, in thy council,
Passion and interest could find a tongue,
While mercy's pleading voice alone was mute,

All circumstances have conspir'd against her;
Thou ne'er hast seen her face, and nothing speaks
Within thy breast for one that 's stranger to thee.
I do not take the part of her misdeeds;
They say 'twas she who plann'd her husband's murder:
'Tis true that she espous'd his murderer.
A grievous crime, no doubt; but then it happen'd
In darksome days of trouble and dismay,
In the stern agony of civil war,
When she, a woman, helpless and hemm'd in
By a rude crowd of rebel vassals, sought
Protection in a powerful chieftain's arms.
God knows what arts were used to overcome her!
For woman is a weak and fragile thing.

ELIZ. . Woman's not weak; there are heroic souls
Among the sex; and, in my presence, Sir,
I do forbid to speak of woman's weakness.

TAL. . . Misfortune was for thee a rigid school;
Thou wast not station'd on the sunny side
Of life; thou saw'st no throne, from far, before thee;
The grave was gaping for thee at thy feet.
At Woodstock, and in London's gloomy tower,
'Twas *there* the gracious father of this land
Taught thee to know thy duty, by misfortune.
No flatt'rer sought thee there: there learn'd thy soul,
Far from the noisy world and its distractions,
To commune with itself, to think apart,
And estimate the real goods of life.
No God protected this poor sufferer:
Transplanted in her early youth to France,
The Court of levity and thoughtless joys,
There, in the round of constant dissipation,
She never heard the earnest voice of truth;
She was deluded by the glare of vice,
And driven onward by the stream of ruin.
Hers was the vain possession of a face,
And she outshone all others of her sex
As far in beauty, as in noble birth.

ELIZ. . Collect yourself, my Lord of Shrewsbury;
Bethink you we are met in solemn council.
Those charms must surely be without compare,

Which can engender, in an elder's blood,
Such fire. My Lord of Leicester, you alone
Are silent; does the subject which has made
Him eloquent, deprive you of your speech?

LEIC. Amazement ties my tongue, my Queen, to think
That they should fill thy soul with such alarms,
And that the idle tales, which, in the streets
Of London, terrify the people's ears,
Should reach th' enlighten'd circle of thy council,
And gravely occupy our statesmen's minds.
Astonishment possesses me, I own,
To think this lackland Queen of Scotland, she
Who could not save her own poor throne, the jest
Of her own vassals, and her country's refuse,
[Who in her fairest days of freedom, was
But thy despised puppet,] should become
At once thy terror when a prisoner.
What, in Heaven's name, can make her formidable?
That she lays claim to England? that the Guises
Will not acknowledge thee as Queen? [Did then
Thy people's loyal fealty await
These Guises' approbation?] Can these Guises
With their objections, ever shake the right
Which birth hath giv'n thee; which, with one consent,
The votes of parliament have ratified?
And is not she, by Henry's will, pass'd o'er
In silence? Is it probable that England,
As yet so bless'd in the new light's enjoyment,
Should throw itself into this papist's arms?
From thee, the sov'reign it adores, desert
To Darnley's murderess? What will they then,
These restless men, who even in thy lifetime
Torment thee with a successor; who cannot
Dispose of thee in marriage soon enough
To rescue church and state from fancied peril?
Stand'st thou not blooming there in youthful prime
While each step leads her tow'rds th'expecting tomb?
By Heavens, I hope thou wilt full many a year
Walk o'er the Stuart's grave, and ne'er become
Thyself the instrument of her sad end.

BUR. Lord Leicester hath not always held this tone.

LEIC. 'Tis true, I in the court of justice gave
My verdict for her death; here, in the council,
I may consistently speak otherwise:
Here, right is not the question, but advantage.
Is this a time to fear her power, when France,
Her only succour, has abandon'd her?
When thou preparest with thy hand to bless
The royal son of France, when the fair hope
Of a new, glorious stem of sovereigns
Begins again to blossom in this land?
Why hasten then her death? She's dead already.
Contempt and scorn are death to her; take heed
Lest ill tim'd pity call her into life.
'Tis therefore my advice to leave the sentence,
By which her life is forfeit, in full force.
Let her live on; but let her live beneath
The headsman's axe, and, from the very hour
One arm is lifted for her, let it fall.

ELIZABETH (*rises*).
My Lords, I now have heard your sev'ral thoughts,
And give my ardent thanks for this your zeal.
With God's assistance, who the hearts of kings
Illumines, I will weigh your arguments,
And choose what best my judgment shall approve.
[*To* BURLEIGH.
[Lord Burleigh's honest fears, I know it well,
Are but the offspring of his faithful care;
But yet, Lord Leicester has most truly said,
There is no need of haste; our enemy
Hath lost already her most dangerous sting—
The mighty arm of France: the fear that she
Might quickly be the victim of their zeal
Will curb the blind impatience of her friends.]

SCENE IV.

Enter SIR AMIAS PAULET *and* MORTIMER.

ELIZ. There's Sir Amias Paulet; noble Sir,
What tidings bring you?

PAUL. Gracious Sovereign,
My nephew, who but lately is return'd
From foreign travel, kneels before thy feet,

And offers thee his first and earliest homage.
Grant him thy royal grace, and let him grow
And flourish in the sunshine of thy favour.

MORTIMER (*kneeling on one knee*).

Long live my royal mistress! Happiness
And glory from a crown to grace her brows!

ELIZ. Arise, Sir Knight; and welcome here in England;
You've made, I hear, the tour, have been in France
And Rome, and tarried too some time at Rheims;
Tell me what plots our enemies are hatching?

MORT. May God confound them all! And may the darts
Which they shall aim against my Sovereign,
Recoiling, strike their own perfidious breasts!

ELIZ. Did you see Morgan, and the wily Bishop
Of Ross?

MORT. I saw, my Queen, all Scottish exiles
Who forge at Rheims their plots against this realm.
I stole into their confidence, in hopes
To learn some hint of their conspiracies.

PAUL. Private despatches they entrusted to him,
In cyphers, for the Queen of Scots, which he,
With loyal hand, hath given up to us.

ELIZ. Say, what are then their latest plans of treason?

MORT. It struck them all as 'twere a thunderbolt,
That France should leave them. and with England close
This firm alliance; now they turn their hopes
Tow'rds Spain——

ELIZABETH. This, Walsingham hath written us.

MORT. Besides, a bull, which from the Vatican
Pope Sixtus lately levell'd at thy throne,
Arriv'd at Rheims, as I was leaving it:
With the next ship, we may expect it here.

LEIC. . England no more is frighten'd by such arms.

BUR. . They're always dangerous in bigots' hands.

ELIZABETH (*looking stedfastly at* MORTIMER).

Your enemies have said, that you frequented
The schools at Rheims, and have abjur'd your faith.

MORT. So I pretended, that I must confess;
Such was my anxious wish to serve my Queen.

ELIZABETH (*to* PAULET, *who presents papers to her*).
What have you there?
PAULET. 'Tis from the Queen of Scots.
'Tis a petition, and to thee address'd.
BURLEIGH (*hastily catching at it*).
Give me the paper.
PAULET (*giving it to the* QUEEN).
By your leave, my Lord
High Treasurer; the Lady order'd me
To bring it to her Majesty's own hands.
She says, I am her enemy; I am
The enemy of her offences only,
And that which is consistent with my duty
I will, and readily, oblige her in.
[*The* QUEEN *takes the letter: as she reads it,* MORTIMER *and* LEICESTER *speak some words in private.*
BURLEIGH (*to* PAULET).
What may the purport of the letter be?
Idle complaints, from which one ought to screen
The Queen's too tender heart
PAULET. What it contains.
She did not hide from me; she asks a boon;
She begs to be admitted to the grace
Of speaking with the Queen.
BURLEIGH. It cannot be.
TAL. . Why not? Her supplication's not unjust.
BUR. . For her, the base encourager of murder;
Her, who hath thirsted for our sov'reign's blood,
The privilege to see the royal presence
Is forfeited: a faithful counsellor
Can never give this treacherous advice.
TAL. . And if the Queen is gracious, Sir, are you
The man to hinder pity's soft emotions?
BUR. . She is condemn'd to death: her head is laid
Beneath the axe, and it would ill become
The Queen to see a death-devoted head.
The sentence cannot have its execution
If the Queen's Majesty approaches her,
For pardon still attends the royal presence,
As sickness flies the health-dispensing hand.

ELIZABETH (*having read the letter, dries her tears*).
O! what is man! What is the bliss of earth!
To what extremities is she reduc'd
Who with such proud and splendid hopes began!
Who, call'd to sit on the most ancient throne
Of Christendom, misled by vain ambition,
Hop'd with a triple crown to deck her brows!
How is her language alter'd, since the time
When she assum'd the arms of England's crown,
And by the flatt'rers of her Court was styled
Sole monarch of the two Britannic isles!
Forgive me, Lords, my heart is cleft in twain,
Anguish possesses me, and my soul bleeds
To think that earthly goods are so unstable,
And that the dreadful fate which rules mankind
Should threaten mine own house, and scowl so near me.

TAL. . . O, Queen! the God of mercy hath inform'd
Your heart; O! hearken to this heav'nly guidance.
Most grievously, indeed, hath she aton'd
Her grievous crime, and it is time that now,
At last, her heavy penance have an end.
Stretch forth your hand, to raise this abject Queen,
And, like the luminous vision of an angel,
Descend into her gaol's sepulchral night.

BUR. . . Be stedfast, mighty Queen; let no emotion
Of seeming laudable humanity
Mislead thee; take not from thyself the pow'r
Of acting as necessity commands.
Thou *canst* not pardon her, thou *canst* not save her:
Then heap not on thyself the odious blame,
That thou, with cruel and contemptuous triumph,
Didst glut thyself with gazing on thy victim.

LEIC. Let us, my Lords, remain within our bounds;
The Queen is wise, and doth not need our counsels,
To lead her to the most becoming choice.
This meeting of the Queens hath nought in common
With the proceedings of the Court of Justice.
The law of England, not the monarch's will,
Condemns the Queen of Scotland, and 'twere worthy

Of the great soul of Queen Elizabeth,
To follow the soft dictates of her heart,
Though justice swerve not from its rigid path.

ELIZ. Retire, my Lords.—We shall, perhaps, find means
To reconcile the tender claims of pity
With what necessity imposes on us.
And now retire.—

[*The Lords retire: she calls* SIR EDWARD MORTIMER *back.*

Sir Edward Mortimer!

SCENE V.

ELIZABETH, MORTIMER.

ELIZABETH (*having measured him for some time, with her eyes, in silence*).

You've shown a spirit of advent'rous courage,
And self-possession, far beyond your years.
He who has timely learnt to play so well
The difficult dissembler's needful task
Becomes a perfect man before his time,
And shortens his probationary years.
Fate calls you to a lofty scene of action;
I prophesy it, and can, happily
For you, fulfil, myself, my own prediction.

MORT. Illustrious mistress, what I am, and all
I can accomplish, is devoted to you.

ELIZ. You've made acquaintance with the foes of England.
Their hate against me is implacable;
Their fell designs are inexhaustible.
As yet, indeed, Almighty Providence
Hath shielded me; but on my brows the crown
For ever trembles, while *she* lives who fans
Their bigot-zeal, and animates their hopes.

MORT. She lives no more, as soon as you command it.

ELIZ. O, Sir! I thought I saw my labour's end,
And I am come no farther than at first.
I wish'd to let the laws of England act,
And keep my own hands pure from blood's defilement.

The sentence is pronounc'd—what gain I by it?
It must be executed, Mortimer,
And I must authorize the execution.
The blame will ever light on me, I must
Avow it, nor can save appearances.
That is the worst—

MORTIMER. But can appearances
Disturb your conscience where the cause is just?

ELIZ. . You are unpractis'd in the world, Sir Knight;
What we appear, is subject to the judgment
Of all mankind, and what we are, of no man.
No one will be convinc'd that I am right:
I must take care that my connivance in
Her death be wrapp'd in everlasting doubt.
In deeds of such uncertain double visage
Safety lies only in obscurity.
Those measures are the worst that stand avow'd,
What 's not abandon'd, is not wholly lost.

MORTIMER (*seeking to learn her meaning*).
Then it perhaps were best—

ELIZABETH (*quick*). Ay, surely 'twere
The best; O, Sir, my better angel speaks
Through you;—go on then, worthy Sir, conclude;
You are in earnest, you examine deep,
Have quite a different spirit from your uncle.

MORTIMER (*surprised*).
Have you imparted then your wishes to him?

ELIZ. . I am sorry that I have.

MORTIMER. Excuse his age,
The old man is grown scrupulous; such bold
Adventures ask the enterprising heart
Of youth—

ELIZABETH. And may I venture then on *you*—

MORT. My hand I'll lend thee; save then as thou canst
Thy reputation—

ELIZABETH. Yes, Sir; if you could
But waken me some morning with this news—
"Maria Stuart, your blood-thirsty foe,
Breath'd yesternight her last"—

MORTIMER. Depend on me.

ELIZ. . When shall my head lie calmly down to sleep?

MORT. The next new moon will terminate thy fears.
ELIZ. . And be the selfsame happy day the dawn
Of your preferment—so God speed you, Sir;
And be not hurt, if, chance, my thankfulness
Should wear the mask of darkness.—Silence is
The happy suitor's god.—The closest bonds,
The dearest, are the work of secrecy. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

MORTIMER (*alone*).

Go, false deceitful Queen! As thou deludest
The world, e'en so I cozen thee; 'tis right,
Thus to betray thee; 'tis a worthy deed.
Look I then like a murd'rer? Hast thou read
Upon my brow such base dexterity?
Trust only to *my* arm, and keep thine own
Conceal'd—assume the pious outward show
Of mercy 'fore the world, while reckoning
In secret on my murd'rous aid; and thus
By gaining time we shall ensure her rescue.
Thou wilt exalt me!—show'st me from afar
The costly recompense: but even were
Thyself the prize, and all thy woman's favour,
What art thou, poor one, and what canst thou proffer?
I scorn ambition's avaricious strife,
With *her* alone is all the charm of life,
O'er *her*, in rounds of endless glory, hover
Spirits with grace, and youth eternal bless'd,
Celestial joy is thron'd upon her breast.
Thou hast but earthly, mortal goods to offer—
That sov'reign good, for which all else be slighted,
When heart in heart, delighting and delighted;
Together flow in sweet forgetfulness;—
Ne'er didst thou woman's fairest crown possess,
Ne'er hast thou with thy hand a lover's heart requited.
—I must attend Lord Leicester, and deliver
Her letter to him—'tis a hateful charge—
I have no confidence in this court puppet—
I can effect her rescue, *I* alone;
Be danger, honour, and the prize my own.
[*As he is going,* PAULET *meets him.*

Scene VII.

Mortimer, Paulet

Paul. . What said the Queen to you?—
Mortimer. 'Twas nothing, Sir;
Nothing of consequence—
Paulet (*looking at him earnestly*). Hear, Mortimer!
It is a false and slipp'ry ground on which
You tread. The grace of princes is alluring,
Youth loves ambition—let not yours betray you.
Mort. Was it not yourself that brought me to the Court?
Paul. O, would to God I had not done as much!
The honour of *our* house was never reap'd
In courts—stand fast my nephew—purchase not
Too dear, nor stain your conscience with a crime.
Mort. What are these fears? What are you dreaming of?
Paul. . How high soe'er the Queen may pledge herself
To raise you, trust not her alluring words.
[The spirit of the world's a lying spirit,
And vice is a deceitful, treach'rous friend.]
She will deny you, if you listen to her;
And, to preserve her own good name, will punish
The bloody deed, which she herself enjoin'd.
Mort. The bloody deed!—
Paulet. Away, dissimulation!—
I know the deed the Queen propos'd to you.
She hopes that your ambitious youth will prove
More docile than my rigid age. But say,
Have you then pledg'd your promise, have you?—
Mort. Uncle!
Paul. . If you have done so, I abandon you,
And lay my curse upon you—
Leicester (*entering*). Worthy Sir!
I with your nephew wish a word.—The Queen
Is graciously inclin'd to him; she wills
That to his custody the Scottish Queen
Be with full powers entrusted. She relies
On his fidelity.
Paulet. Relies!—'tis well—
Leic. . What say you, Sir?

PAULET. Her Majesty relies
On him; and I, my noble Lord, rely
Upon myself, and my two open eyes. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

LEICESTER, MORTIMER.

LEICESTER (*surprised*). What ailed the Knight?
MORTIMER. My Lord, I cannot tell
What angers him:—the confidence, perhaps,
The Queen so suddenly confers on me.
LEIC. . Are you deserving then of confidence?
MORT. . This would I ask of you, my Lord of Leicester.
LEIC. . You said you wish'd to speak with me in private
MORT. . Assure me first that I may safely venture.
LEIC. . Who gives me an assurance on your side?
Let not my want of confidence offend you;
I see you, Sir, exhibit at this court
Two diff'rent aspects; one of them *must* be
A borrow'd one; but which of them is real?
MORT. . The selfsame doubts I have concerning you.
LEIC. . Which, then, shall pave the way to confidence?
MORT. . He who, by doing it, is least in danger
LEIC. . Well, that are you—
MORTIMER. No, you;—the evidence
Of such a weighty, powerful peer as you
Can overwhelm my voice. My accusation
Is weak against your rank and influence.
LEIC. . Sir, you mistake. In ev'rything but this
I'm pow'rful here; but in this tender point,
Which I am call'd upon to trust you with,
I am the weakest man of all the Court,
The poorest testimony can undo me.
MORT. . If the all-pow'rful Earl of Leicester deign
To stoop so low to meet me, and to make
Such a confession to me, I may venture
To think a little better of myself,
And lead the way in magnanimity.
LEIC. . Lead you the way of confidence, I'll follow.
MORTIMER (*producing suddenly the letter*).
Here is a letter from the Queen of Scotland.

LEICESTER (*alarmed, catches hastily at the letter*).
Speak softly, Sir!—what see I?—Oh, it is
Her picture!—
[*Kisses and examines it with speechless joy—a pause.*
MORTIMER (*who has watched him closely the whole time*).
Now, my Lord, I can believe you.
LEICESTER (*having hastily run through the letter*).
You know the purport of this letter, Sir?
MORT. . Not I.—
LEICESTER. Indeed! She surely hath inform'd you—
MORT. . Nothing hath she inform'd me of. She said
You would explain this riddle to me—'tis
To me a riddle, that the Earl of Leicester,
The far-fam'd fav'rite of Elizabeth,
The open, bitter enemy of Mary,
And one of those who spoke her mortal sentence,
Should be the man from whom the Queen expects
Deliv'rance from her woes; and yet it must be;
Your eyes express too plainly, what your heart
Feels for the hapless lady.—
LEICESTER. Tell me, Sir,
First, how it comes that you should take so warm
An int'rest in her fate; and what it was
Gain'd you her confidence?—
MORTIMER. My Lord, I can,
And in few words, explain this mystery.
I lately have at Rome abjur'd my creed,
And stand in correspondence with the Guises.
A letter from the Cardinal Archbishop
Was my credential with the Queen of Scots.
LEIC. . I am acquainted, Sir, with your conversion;
'Twas that which wak'd my confidence towards you.
[Each remnant of distrust be henceforth banish'd;]
Your hand, Sir, pardon me these idle doubts.
I cannot use too much precaution here.
Knowing how Walsingham and Burleigh hate me,
And, watching me, in secret spread their snares;
You might have been their instrument, their creature,
To lure me to their toils.

MORTIMER. How poor a part
So great a nobleman is forc'd to play
At court! My Lord, I pity you.
LEICESTER. With joy
I rest upon the faithful breast of friendship,
Where I can ease me of this long constraint.
You seem surpris'd, Sir, that my heart is turn'd
So suddenly towards the captive Queen.
In truth, I never hated her;—the times
Have forc'd me to appear her enemy.
She was, as you well know, my destined bride,
Long since, ere she bestow'd her hand on Darnley,
While yet the beams of glory round her smil'd.
Coldly I *then* refused the proffered boon.
Now in confinement, at the gates of death,
I claim her, at the hazard of my life.
MORT. . True magnanimity, my Lord—
LEICESTER. The state
Of circumstances, since that time, is chang'd.
Ambition made me all insensible
To youth and beauty.—Mary's hand I held
Too insignificant for me;—I hoped
To be the husband of the Queen of England.
MORT. . It is well known she gave you preference
Before all others.
LEICESTER. So, indeed, it seem'd.
Now, after ten lost years of tedious courtship,
And hateful self-constraint—O, Sir, my heart
Must ease itself of this long agony.
They call me happy!—Did they only know
What the chains are, for which they envy me!
When I had sacrificed ten bitter years
To the proud idol of her vanity;
Submitted with a slave's humility
To ev'ry change of her despotic fancies;
The plaything of each little wayward whim.
At times by seeming tenderness caressed,
As oft repulsed with proud and cold disdain;
Alike tormented by her grace and rigour:
Watch'd like a pris'ner by the Argus-eyes
Of jealousy; examin'd like a school-boy,

And rail'd at like a servant.—O, no tongue
Can paint this hell —

MORTIMER. My Lord, I feel for you.

LEIC. . To lose, and at the very goal, the prize!
Another comes to rob me of the fruits
Of my so anxious wooing. I must lose
To her young blooming husband all those rights
Of which I was so long in full possession;
And I must from the stage descend, where I
So long have play'd the most distinguish'd part.
'Tis not her hand alone this envious stranger
Threatens, he'd rob me of her favour too;
She is a woman, and he form'd to please.

MORT. . He is the son of Cath'rine. He has learnt,
In a good school, the arts of flattery.

LEIC. . Thus fall my hopes;—I strove to seize a plank
To bear me in this shipwreck of my fortunes,
And my eye turn'd itself towards the hope
Of former days once more; then Mary's image
Within me was renew'd, and youth and beauty
Once more asserted all their former rights.
No more 'twas cold ambition; 'twas my heart
Which now compar'd, and with regret I felt
The value of the jewel I had lost.
With horror I beheld her in the depths
Of misery, cast down by my transgression;
Then wak'd the hope in me, that I might still
Deliver and possess her; I contriv'd
To send her, through a faithful hand, the news
Of my conversion to her interests;
And in this letter which you brought me, she
Assures me that she pardons me, and offers
Herself as guerdon, if I rescue her.

MORT. . But you attempted nothing for her rescue.
You let her be condemn'd without a word;
You gave, yourself, your verdict for her death;
A miracle must happen, and the light
Of truth must move me, *me*, her keeper's nephew,
And Heav'n ust, in the Vatican at Rome,
Prepare for her an unexpected succour,
Else had she never found the way to you.

LEIC. . O, Sir! it has tormented me enough!
About this time it was, that they remov'd her
From Talbot's castle, and deliver'd her
Up to your uncle's stricter custody.
Each way to her was shut. I was oblig'd,
Before the world, to persecute her still;
But do not think that I would patiently
Have seen her led to death. No, Sir; I hop'd,
And still I hope, to ward off all extremes,
Till I can find some certain means to save her.
MORT. . These are already found: my Lord of Leicester,
Your gen'rous confidence in me deserves
A like return. *I* will deliver her.
That is my object here—my dispositions
Are made already, and your pow'rful aid,
Assures us of success in our attempt.
LEIC. . What say you?—you alarm me—how?—you would—
MORT. . I'll open forcibly her prison-gates:—
I have confederates, and all is ready.
LEIC. . You have confederates, accomplices?
Alas! In what rash enterprise would you
Engage me? And these friends, know they *my* secret?
MORT. . Fear not; our plan was laid without your help,
Without your help it would have been accomplish'd,
Had she not signified her resolution
To owe her liberty to you alone.
LEIC. . And can you then, with certainty, assure me,
That in your plot my name has not been mention'd?
MORT. . You may depend upon it. How, my Lord,
So scrupulous when help is offer'd you?
You wish to rescue Mary, and possess her;
You find confed'rates; sudden, unexpected,
The readiest means fall, as it were from Heav'n,
Yet you show more perplexity than joy.
LEIC. . We must avoid all violence; it is
Too dangerous an enterprise.
MORTIMER. Delay
Is also dangerous.
LEICESTER. I tell you, Sir,
'Tis not to be attempted—
MORTIMER. 'Tis, my Lord,

Too hazardous for *you* who would possess her;
But *we*, who only wish to rescue her,
We are more bold.

LEICESTER. Young man, you are too hasty
In such a thorny, dangerous attempt.

MORT. . And you too scrupulous in honour's cause.

LEIC. . I see the trammels that are spread around us.

MORT. . And I feel courage to break through them all.

LEIC. . Fool-hardiness and madness, is this courage?

MORT. . This prudence is not bravery, my Lord.

LEIC. . You surely wish to end like Babington.

MORT. . You not to imitate great Norfolk's virtue.

LEIC. . Norfolk ne'er won the bride he woo'd so fondly.

MORT. . But yet he prov'd how truly he deserved her.

LEIC. . If *we* are ruin'd, she must fall with us.

MORT. . If *we* risk nothing, she will ne'er be rescued.

LEIC. . You will not weigh the matter, will not hear;
With blind and hasty rashness you destroy
The plans which I so happily had framed.

MORT. . And what were then the plans which *you* had fram'd?
What have *you* done then to deliver her?
And how, if I were miscreant enough
To murder her, as was propos'd to me
This moment by Elizabeth, and which
She looks upon as certain; only name
The measures *you* have taken to protect her?

LEIC. . Did the Queen give you then this bloody order?

MORT. . She was deceiv'd in me, as Mary is
In you.

LEICESTER. And have you promis'd it; say, have you?

MORT. . That she might not engage another's hand,
I offer'd mine.

LEICESTER. Well done, Sir,—that was right;—
This gives us leisure, for she rests secure
Upon your bloody service, and the sentence
Is unfulfill'd the while, and we gain time.

MORTIMER (*angrily*).
No, we are losing time.

LEICESTER The Queen depends
On you, and will the readier make a show
Of mercy—and I may prevail on her

To give an audience to her adversary;
And by this stratagem we tie her hands:
Yes! I will make the attempt, strain ev'ry nerve.
MORT. And what is gain'd by this? When she discovers
That I am cheating her, that Mary lives;
Are we not where we were? She never will
Be free; the mildest doom which can await her
At best, is but perpetual confinement
A daring deed must one day end the matter;
Why will you not with such a deed begin?
The pow'r is in your hands, would you but rouse
The might of your dependents round about
Your many castles, 'twere an host; and still
Has Mary many secret friends. The Howards
And Percies' noble houses, though their chiefs
Be fall'n, are rich in heroes; they but wait
For the example of some potent lord.
Away with feigning—act an open part,
And, like a loyal knight, protect your fair;
Fight a good fight for her! You know you are
Lord of the person of the Queen of England,
Whene'er you will: invite her to your castle,
Oft hath she thither follow'd you—then show
That you're a man—then speak as master—keep her
Confin'd till she release the Queen of Scots.
LEIC. I am astonish'd—I am terrified!—
Where would your giddy madness hurry you?
Are you acquainted with this country? Know you
The deeps and shallows of this court? With what
A potent spell this female sceptre binds
And rules men's spirits round her? 'Tis in vain
You seek th' heroic energy which once
Was active in this land!—it is subdued,—
A woman holds it under lock and key,
And ev'ry spring of courage is relax'd.
Follow my counsel—venture nothing rashly.
Some one approaches—go—
MORTIMER. And Mary hopes—
Shall I return to her with empty comfort?
LEIC. Bear her my vows of everlasting love.

MORT. Bear them yourself! I offer'd my assistance
As her deliv'rer, not your messenger. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER.

ELIZ. Say who was here? I heard the sound of voices.
LEICESTER (*turning quickly and perplexed round, on hearing the* QUEEN).
It was young Mortimer—
ELIZABETH. How now, my Lord:
Why so confus'd?
LEICESTER (*collecting himself*).
Your presence is the cause.
Ne'er did I see thy beauty so resplendent,
My sight is dazzled by thy heavenly charms.
Oh!—
ELIZABETH. Whence this sigh?
LEICESTER. Have I no reason, then,
To sigh? When I behold you in your glory,
I feel anew, with pain unspeakable,
The loss which threatens me.
ELIZABETH. What loss, my Lord?
LEIC. Your heart—your own inestimable self:—
Soon will you feel yourself within the arms
Of your young ardent husband, highly bless'd:
He will possess your heart, without a rival.
He is of royal blood—that am not *I*.
Yet, spite of all the world can say, there lives not
One on this globe, who with such fervent zeal
Adores you, as the man who loses you.
Anjou hath never seen you, can but love
Your glory, and the splendour of your reign;—
But I love *you*—and were you born, of all
The peasant maids the poorest, I the first
Of kings, I would descend to your condition,
And lay my crown and sceptre at your feet!
ELIZ. Pity me, my Dudley; do not blame me—
I cannot ask my heart. Oh, *that* had chosen
Far otherwise! Ah, how I envy others

Who can exalt the object of their love!
But I am not so blest:—'tis not my fortune
To place upon the brows of him, the dearest
Of men to me, the royal crown of England.
The Queen of Scotland was allow'd to make
Her hand the token of her inclination;—
She hath had ev'ry freedom, and hath drunk,
E'en to the very dregs, the cup of joy.

LEIC. . And now she drinks the bitter cup of sorrow.

ELIZ. . She never did respect the world's opinion;—
Life was to her a sport;—she never courted
The yoke to which I bow'd my willing neck.
And yet, methinks, I had as just a claim
As she, to please myself, and taste the joys
Of life:—but I preferr'd the rigid duties
Which royalty imposed on me;—yet *she*,
She was the favourite of all the men,
Because she only strove to be a woman;
And youth and age became alike her suitors.
Thus are the men—voluptuaries all!
The willing slaves of levity and pleasure;
Value that least which claims their reverence.
And did not even Talbot, though grey-headed,
Grow young again, when speaking of her charms?

LEIC. . Forgive him—for he was her keeper once,
And she has fool'd him with her cunning wiles.

ELIZ. . And is it really true, that she's so fair?
So often have I been oblig'd to hear
The praises of this wonder—it were well
If I could learn on what I might depend:
Pictures are flattering, and description lies;—
I will trust nothing, but my own conviction.
Why gaze you at me thus?

LEICESTER. I plac'd in thought
You and Maria Stuart, side by side.
Yes! I confess, I oft have felt a wish,
If it could be but secretly contriv'd,
To see you placed beside the Scottish Queen.
Then would you feel, and not till then, the full
Enjoyment of your triumph:—she deserves
To be thus humbled; she deserves to see,

With her own eyes, and envy's glance is keen,
Herself surpass'd, to feel herself o'ermatch'd,
As much by thee in form and princely grace,
As in each virtue that adorns the sex.

ELIZ. . In years she has th' advantage—

LEICESTER. Has she so?
I never should have thought it. But her griefs,
Her sufferings, indeed! 'tis possible,
Have brought down age upon her ere her time.
Yes, and 'twould mortify her more to see thee
As bride—*she* hath already turn'd her back
On each fair hope of life, and she would see thee
Advancing tow'rds the open arms of joy—
See thee as bride of France's royal son.
She who hath always plumed herself so high
On her connection with the House of France,
And still depends upon its mighty aid.

ELIZABETH (*with a careless air*).
I'm teaz'd to grant this interview.

LEICESTER. She asks it
As a favour; grant it as a punishment.
For though you should conduct her to the block,
Yet would it less torment her, than to see
Herself extinguish'd by your beauty's splendour.
Thus can you murder her, as she hath wish'd
To murder you. When she beholds your beauty,
Guarded by modesty, and beaming bright,
In the clear glory of unspotted fame,
(Which *she* with thoughtless levity discarded,)
Exalted by the splendour of the crown,
And blooming now with tender bridal graces—
Then is the hour of her destruction come.
Yes—when I now behold you—you were never,
No, never were you so prepar'd to seal
The triumph of your beauty. As but now
You enter'd the apartment, I was dazzled
As by a glorious vision from on high.
Could you but now, now as you are, appear
Before her, you could find no better moment.

ELIZ. . Now?—no—not now—no Leicester—this must be
Maturely weigh'd—I must with Burleigh—

LEICESTER. Burleigh!
To him you are but Sov'reign, and as such
Alone he seeks your welfare; but your rights,
Deriv'd from womanhood, this tender point
Must be decided by your own tribunal,
Not by the statesman:—yet e'en policy
Demands that you should see her, and allure,
By such a gen'rous deed, the public voice.
You can hereafter act as it may please you,
To rid you of the hateful enemy.

ELIZ. . But would it then become me to behold
My kinswoman in infamy and want?
They say she is not royally attended;
Would not the sight of her distress reproach me?

LEIC. . You need not cross her threshold—hear my counsel:—
A fortunate conjuncture favours it.
The hunt you mean to honour with your presence
Is in the neighbourhood of Fotheringay;
Permission may be giv'n to Lady Stuart
To take the air; you meet her in the park,
As if by accident; it must not seem
To have been plann'd, and should you not incline,
You need not speak to her.

ELIZABETH. If I am foolish,
Be yours the fault, not mine. I would not care
To-day to cross your wishes; for to-day
I've griev'd you more than all my other subjects.
[*Tenderly.*
Let it then be your fancy. Leicester, hence
You see the free obsequiousness of love,
Which suffers that which it cannot approve.
[LEICESTER *prostrates himself before her, and the curtain falls.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

In a Park.—In the foreground Trees; in the background a distant Prospect.

MARY *advances, running from behind the Trees:* HANNAH KENNEDY *follows slowly.*

KEN. . You hasten on as if endow'd with wings—
I cannot follow you so swiftly—wait.

MARY.. Freedom returns! O let me enjoy it,—
Let me be childish,—be childish with me!
Freedom invites me! O let me employ it,
Skimming with winged step light o'er the lea;
Have I escaped from this mansion of mourning?
Holds me no more the sad dungeon of care?
Let me, with joy and with eagerness burning,
Drink in the free, the celestial air!

KEN. . O, my dear Lady! but a very little
Is your sad gaol extended; you behold not
The wall that shuts us in; these plaited tufts
Of trees hide from your sight the hated object.

MARY.. Thanks to these friendly trees, that hide from me
My prison walls, and flatter my illusion!
Happy I now may dream myself, and free;
Why wake me from my dream's so sweet confusion?
The extended vault of heaven around me lies,
Free and unfetter'd range my wandering eyes
O'er space's vast immeasurable sea! -
From where yon misty mountains rise on high,
I can my empire's boundaries explore;
And those light clouds which, steering southwards, fly,
Seek the mild clime of France's genial shore.
Fast fleeting clouds! ye meteors that fly;
Could I but with you sail through the sky!
Tenderly greet the dear land of my youth!
Here I am captive! oppress'd by my foes,
No other than you may carry my woes,
Free thro' the ether your pathway is seen,
Ye own not the power of this tyrant Queen.

KEN. . Alas! dear Lady! You're beside yourself,

This long-lost, long-sought freedom makes you rave.

MARY. Yonder's a fisher returning to home;—
Poor though it be, would he lend me his wherry,
Quick to congenial shores would I ferry.
Spare is his trade, and labour's his doom—
Rich would I freight his vessel with treasure,
Such a draught should be his as he never had seen,
Wealth should he find in his nets without measure,
Would he but rescue a poor captive Queen.

KEN. Fond, fruitless wishes! See you not from far,
How we are follow'd by observing spies?—
A dismal, barb'rous prohibition scares
Each sympathetic being from our path.

MARY. No, gentle Hannah! Trust me, not in vain
My prison gates are open'd. This small grace
Is harbinger of greater happiness.
No! I mistake not—'tis the active hand
Of love to which I owe this kind indulgence
I recognise in this the mighty arm
Of Leicester. They will by degrees expand
My prison; will accustom me, through small,
To greater liberty, until at last
I shall behold the face of him whose hand
Will dash my fetters off, and that for ever.

KEN. O, my dear Queen! I cannot reconcile
These contradictions. 'Twas but yesterday
That they announc'd your death, and all at once,
To-day, you have such liberty. Their chains
Are also loos'd, as I have oft been told,
Whom everlasting liberty awaits.

[*Hunting horns at a distance.*

MARY. Hear'st thou the bugle, so blithely resounding?
Hear'st thou its echoes through wood and through plain?
Oh, might I now, on my nimble steed bounding,
Join with the jocund, the frolicsome train!

[*Hunting horns again heard.*

Again! O this sad and this pleasing remembrance!
These are the sounds, which, so sprightly and clear,
Oft, when with music the hounds and the horn,
So cheerfully welcom'd the break of the morn,
On the heaths of the Highlands delighted my ear.

SCENE II.

Enter PAULET.

PAUL. . Well! have I acted right at last, my Lady?
Do I for once, at least, deserve your thanks?
MARY. . How! Do I owe this favour, Sir, to you?
PAUL. . Why not to me? I visited the Court,
And gave the Queen your letter.
MARY. Did you give it?
In very truth did you deliver it?
And is this freedom which I now enjoy,
The happy consequence?
PAULET (*significantly*). Nor that alone;
Prepare yourself to see a greater still.
MARY. . A greater still! What do you mean by that?
PAUL. . You heard the bugle-horns?
MARY (*starting back with foreboding apprehension*).
You frighten me—
PAUL. . The Queen is hunting in the neighbourhood—
MARY. What!
PAUL. . In a few moments she'll appear before you.
KENNEDY (*hastening towards* MARY, *and about to fall*).
How fare you, dearest Lady?—you grow pale.
PAUL. . How? Is't not well? Was it not then your pray'r?
'Tis granted now, before it was expected;
You who had ever such a ready speech,
Now summon all your powers of eloquence,
The important time to use them now is come.
MARY. . O, why was I not told of this before?
Now I am not prepar'd for it—not now—
What, as the greatest favour, I besought,
Seems to me now most fearful:—Hannah, come,
Lead me into the house, till I collect
My spirits.
PAULET. Stay;—you must await her here.
Yes!—I believe you may be well alarm'd
To stand before your judge.

SCENE III.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY

MARY. 'Tis not for that,
O God! Far other thoughts possess me now.

O, worthy Shrewsbury! You come, as though
You were an angel sent to me from heav'n.
I cannot, will not see her. Save me, save me
From the detested sight!

SHREWSBURY. Your Majesty,
Command yourself, and summon all your courage;
'Tis the decisive moment of your fate.

MARY. For years I've waited, and prepared myself.
For this I've studied, weigh'd, and written down
Each word within the tablet of my mem'ry,
That was to touch, and move her to compassion.
Forgotten suddenly, effac'd is all,
And nothing lives within me at this moment,
But the fierce, burning feeling of my wrongs
My heart is turn'd to direst hate against her;
All gentle thoughts, all sweet forgiving words
Are gone, and round me stand with grisly mien,
The fiends of hell, and shake their snaky locks!

SHREW. Command your wild, rebellious blood;—constrain
The bitterness which fills your heart. No good
Ensues, when hatred is oppos'd to hate.
How much soe'er the inward struggle cost,
You must submit to stern necessity,
The pow'r is in her hand, be therefore humble.

MARY. To her? I never can.

SHREWSBURY. But pray, submit.
Speak with respect, with calmness! Strive to move
Her magnanimity; insist not, now,
Upon your rights, not now—'tis not the season.

MARY. Ah! wo is me! I've pray'd for my destruction,
And, as a curse to me, my prayer is heard.
We never should have seen each other—never!—
O, this can never, never come to good.
Rather in love could fire and water meet,
The timid lamb embrace the roaring tiger!—
I have been hurt too grievously; she hath
Too grievously oppress'd me;—no atonement
Can make us friends!

SHREWSBURY. First see her, face to face:
Did I not see how she was mov'd at reading
Your letter? How her eyes were drown'd in tears?
No—she is not unfeeling; only place

More confidence in her. It was for this
That I came on before her, to entreat you,
To be collected—to admonish you—

MARY (*seizing his hand*).

Oh, Talbot! you have ever been my friend,
Had I but stay'd beneath your kindly care!
They have, indeed, misused me, Shrewsbury.

SHREW. Let all be now forgot, and only think
How to receive her with submissiveness.

MARY. Is Burleigh with her too, my evil genius?

SHREW. No one attends her but the Earl of Leicester.

MARY. Lord Leicester?

SHREWSBURY. Fear not him; it is not he
Who wishes your destruction;—'twas his work,
That here the Queen hath granted you this meeting.

MARY. Ah! well I knew it.

SHEWSBURY. What?

PAULET. The Queen approaches

[*They all draw aside;* MARY *alone remains, leaning on* KENNEDY.

SCENE IV.

The same, ELIZABETH, EARL OF LEICESTER, *and Retinue.*

ELIZABETH (*to* LEICESTER).

What seat is that, my Lord?

LEICESTER. 'Tis Fotheringay.

ELIZABETH (*to* SHREWSBURY).

My Lord, send back our retinue to London;
The people crowd too eager in the roads,
We'll seek a refuge in this quiet park.

[TALBOT *sends the train away. She looks stedfastly at* MARY, *as she speaks further with* PAULET.

My honest people love me overmuch.
These signs of joy are quite idolatrous.
Thus should a God be honour'd, not a mortal.

MARY (*who the whole time had leaned, almost fainting, on* KENNEDY, *rises now, and her eyes meet the steady, piercing look of* ELIZABETH; *she shudders and throws herself again upon* KENNEDY'S *bosom*).

O God! from out these features speaks no heart.

ELIZ. What lady 's that?—

[*A general, embarrassed silence.*

LEICESTER. You are at Fotheringay,
My Liege!

ELIZABETH (*as if surprised, casting an angry look at* LEICESTER).
Who hath done this, my Lord of Leicester?

LEIC. . Tis past, my Queen;—and now that Heav'n hath led
Your footsteps hither, be magnanimous;
And let sweet pity be triumphant now.

SHREW. O royal mistress! yield to our entreaties;
O cast your eyes on this unhappy one,
Who stands dissolved in anguish.

[MARY *collects herself, and begins to advance towards* ELIZABETH, *stops shuddering at half way:—her action expresses the most violent internal struggle.*

ELIZABETH. How, my Lords!
Which of you then announc'd to me a prisoner
Bow'd down by wo? I see a haughty one,
By no means humbled by calamity.

MARY. . Well be it so:—to this will I submit.
Farewell high thought, and pride of noble mind!
I will forget my dignity, and all
My sufferings; I will fall before *her* feet,
Who hath reduced me to this wretchedness.

[*She turns towards the* QUEEN.
The voice of Heav'n decides for you, my sister.
Your happy brows are now with triumph crown'd,
I bless the Power Divine, which thus hath rais'd you.

[*She kneels.*
But in your turn be merciful, my sister;
Let me not lie before you thus disgraced;
Stretch forth your hand, your royal hand, to raise
Your sister from the depths of her distress.

ELIZABETH (*stepping back*).
You are where it becomes you, Lady Stuart;
And thankfully I prize my God's protection,
Who hath not suffer'd me to kneel a suppliant
Thus at your feet, as you now kneel at mine.

MARY (*with increasing energy of feeling*).
Think on all earthly things, vicissitudes.
Oh! there are gods who punish haughty pride:
Respect them, honour them, the dreadful ones

Who thus before thy feet have humbled me!
Before these strangers' eyes, dishonour not
Yourself in me: profane not, nor disgrace
The royal blood of Tudor. In my veins
It flows as pure a stream, as in your own.
O! for God's pity, stand not so estranged
And inaccessible, like some tall cliff,
Which the poor shipwreck'd mariner in vain
Struggles to seize, and labours to embrace.
My all, my life, my fortune now depends
Upon the influence of my words and tears;
That I may touch your heart, O! set mine free.
If you regard me with those icy looks,
My shudd'ring heart contracts itself, the stream
Of tears is dried, and frigid horror chains
The words of supplication in my bosom!

ELIZABETH (*cold and severe*).

What would you say to me, my Lady Stuart?
You wish'd to speak with me; and I, forgetting
The Queen, and all the wrongs I have sustain'd,
Fulfil the pious duty of the sister,
And grant the boon you wished for of my presence.
Yet I, in yielding to the gen'rous feelings
Of magnanimity, expose myself
To rightful censure, that I stoop so low.
For well you know, you would have had me murder'd.

MARY. O! how shall I begin? O, how shall I
So artfully arrange my cautious words,
That they may touch, yet not offend your heart?—
Strengthen my words, O Heav'n! and take from them
Whate'er might wound. Alas! I cannot speak
In my own cause, without impeaching you,
And that most heavily, I wish not so;
You have not, as you ought, behav'd to me;
I am a Queen, like you, yet you have held me
Confin'd in prison. As a suppliant
I came to you, yet *you* in me insulted
The pious use of hospitality;
Slighting in me the holy law of nations,
Immur'd me in a dungeon—tore from me
My friends and servants; to unseemly want

I was exposed, and hurried to the bar
Of a disgraceful, insolent tribunal.
No more of this;—in everlasting silence
Be buried all the cruelties I suffer'd!
See—I will throw the blame of all on fate.
'Twas not your fault, no more than it was mine.
An evil spirit rose from the abyss,
To kindle in our hearts the flames of hate,
By which our tender youth had been divided.
It grew with us, and bad designing men
Fann'd with their ready breath the fatal fire:
Frantics, enthusiasts, with sword and dagger
Arm'd the uncall'd-for hand! This is the curse
Of kings, that they, divided, tear the world
In pieces with their hatred, and let loose
The raging furies of all hellish strife!
No foreign tongue is now between us, sister,
[*Approaching her confidently, and with a flattering tone.*
Now stand we face to face; now, sister, speak;
Name but my crime, I'll fully satisfy you,—
Alas! had you vouchsaf'd to hear me then,
When I so earnest sought to meet your eye,
It never would have come to this, nor would,
Here in this mournful place, have happen'd now
This so distressful, this so mournful meeting.

ELIZ. My better stars preserv'd me. I was warn'd,
And laid not to my breast the pois'nous adder!
Accuse not fate! your own deceitful heart
It was, the wild ambition of your house:
As yet no enmities had pass'd between us,
When your imperious uncle, the proud priest,
Whose shameless hand grasps at all crowns, attack'd me
With unprovok'd hostility, and taught
You, but too docile, to assume my arms,
To vest yourself with my imperial title,
And meet me in the lists in mortal strife:
What arms employ'd he not to storm my throne?
The curses of the priests, the people's sword,
The dreadful weapons of religious frenzy;—

Ev'n here in my own kingdom's peaceful haunts,
He fann'd the flames of civil insurrection;—
But God is with me, and the haughty priest
Has not maintain'd the field. The blow was aim'd
Full at my head, but yours it is which falls!

MARY. I'm in the hand of Heav'n. You never will
Exert so cruelly the pow'r it gives you.

ELIZ Who shall prevent me? Say, did not your uncle
Set all the kings of Europe the example,
How to conclude a peace with those they hate.
Be mine the school of Saint Bartholomew;
What 's kindred then to me, or nations' laws?
The church can break the bands of ev'ry duty;
It consecrates the regicide, the traitor;
I only practise what your priests have taught!
Say then, what surety can be offer'd me,
Should I magnanimously loose your bonds?
Say, with what lock can I secure your faith,
Which by St. Peter's keys cannot be open'd?
Force is my only surety; no alliance
Can be concluded with a race of vipers.

MARY. O! this is but your wretched, dark suspicion!
For you have constantly regarded me
But as a stranger, and an enemy,
Had you declar'd me heir to your dominions,
As is my right, then gratitude and love
In me had fix'd, for you, a faithful friend
And kinswoman.

ELIZABETH. Your friendship is abroad,
Your house is Papacy, the monk your brother.
Name *you* my successor! The treach'rous snare!
That in my life you might seduce my people;
And, like a sly Armida, in your net
Entangle all our noble English youth;
That all might turn to the new rising sun,
And I—

MARY. O sister, rule your realm in peace:
I give up ev'ry claim to these domains—
Alas! the pinions of my soul are lam'd;
Greatness entices me no more: your point
Is gain'd; I am but Mary's shadow now—

My noble spirit is at last broke down
By long captivity:—you've done your worst
On me; you have destroy'd me in my bloom!
Now, end your work, my sister;—speak at length
The word, which to pronounce has brought you hither;
For I will ne'er believe, that you are come,
To mock unfeelingly your hapless victim.
Pronounce this word;—say, "Mary, you are free:
You have already felt my pow'r,—learn now
To honour too my generosity."
Say this, and I will take my life, will take
My freedom, as a present from your hands.
One word makes all undone:—I wait for it;—
O let it not be needlessly delay'd.
Wo to you, if you end not with this word!
For should you not, like some divinity,
Dispensing noble blessings, quit me now,
Then, sister, not for all this island's wealth,
For all the realms encircled by the deep,
Would I exchange my present lot for yours.

ELIZ. . And you confess at last, that you are conquer'd:
Are all your schemes run out? No more assassins
Now on the road? Will no adventurer
Attempt again, for you, the sad achievement?
Yes, madam, it is over:—You'll seduce
No mortal more. The world has other cares;—
None is ambitious of the dang'rous honour
Of being your fourth husband:—You destroy
Your wooers like your husbands.

MARY (*starting angrily*). Sister, sister!—
Grant me forbearance, all ye powr's of heav'n!

ELIZABETH (*regards her long, with a look of proud contempt*).
Those then, my Lord of Leicester, are the charms
Which no man with impunity can view,
Near which no woman dare attempt to stand?
In sooth, this honour has been cheaply gain'd;
She who to all is common, may with ease
Become the common object of applause

MARY. . This is too much!

ELIZABETH (*laughing insultingly*).
You show us now, indeed,

Your real face; till now 'twas but the mask.

MARY (*burning with rage, yet dignified and noble*).

My sins were human, and the faults of youth;
Superior force misled me. I have never
Denied or sought to hide it: I despis'd,
All false appearance as became a Queen.
The worst of me is known, and I can say,
That I am better than the fame I bear.
Wo to you! when, in time to come, the world
Shall draw the robe of honour from your deeds,
With which thy arch-hypocrisy has veil'd
The raging flames of lawless secret lust.
Virtue was not your portion from your mother;
Well know we what it was which brought the head
Of Anna Boleyn to the fatal block.

SHREWSBURY (*stepping between both* QUEENS).

O! Heav'n! Alas, and must it come to this!
Is this the moderation, the submission,
My Lady?—

MARY. Moderation! I've supported
What human nature can support: farewell,
Lamb-hearted resignation, passive patience,
Fly to thy native heaven; burst at length
Thy bonds, come forward from thy dreary cave,
In all thy fury, long-suppressed rancour!
And thou, who to the anger'd basilisk
Impart'st the murd'rous glance, O, arm my tongue
With poison'd darts!

SHREWSBURY. She is beside herself!
Exasperated, mad! My Liege, forgive her.

[ELIZABETH, *speechless with anger, casts enraged looks at Mary.*

LEICESTER (*in the most violent agitation; he seeks to lead* ELIZABETH *away*).

Attend not to her rage! Away, away,
From this disastrous place!

MARY (*raising her voice*). A bastard soils,
Profanes the English throne! The gen'rous Britons
Are cheated by a juggler, [whose whole figure
Is false and painted, heart as well as face!]
If right prevail'd, you now would in the dust

Before me lie, for I'm your rightful monarch!

[ELIZABETH *hastily quits the stage; the Lords follow her in the greatest consternation.*

SCENE V.

MARY, KENNEDY.

KEN. . . What have you done? She has gone hence in wrath.
All hope is over now!

MARY (*still quite beside herself*).
Gone hence in wrath!
She carries death within her heart! I know it.
[*Falling on* KENNEDY'S *bosom.*
Now I am happy, Hannah! and, at last,
After whole years of sorrow and abasement,
One moment of victorious revenge!
A weight falls off my heart, a weight of mountains;
I plung'd the steel in my oppressor's breast!

KEN. . . Unhappy Lady! Frenzy overcomes you.
Yes, you have wounded your invet'rate foe;
'Tis she who wields the light'ning, she is Queen,
You have insulted her before her minion.

MARY. . I have abas'd her before Leicester's eyes;
He saw it, he was witness of my triumph.
How did I hurl her from her haughty height,
He saw it, and his presence strengthen'd me.

SCENE VI.

Enter MORTIMER.

KEN. . . O Sir! What an occurrence!

MORTIMER. I heard all—

[*Gives the nurse a sign to repair to her post, and draws nearer; his whole appearance expresses the utmost violence of passion.*
Thine is the palm;—thou trod'st her to the dust!—
Thou wast the Queen, she was the malefactor;—
I am transported with thy noble courage;—
Yes! I adore thee; like a Deity,
My sense is dazzled by thy heav'nly beams.

MARY (*with vivacity and expectation*).
You spoke with Leicester, gave my letter to him,—
My present too?—O speak, Sir.

MORTIMER (*beholding her with glowing looks*).
How thy noble,
Thy royal indignation shone, and cast
A glory round thy beauty; yes, by Heavens,
Thou art the fairest woman upon earth!
MARY. . Sir, satisfy, I beg you, my impatience;
What says his Lordship? Say, Sir, may I hope?
MORT. . Who?—he?—he is a wretch, a very coward,
Hope nought from him; despise him, and forget him!
MARY. . What say you?
MORTIMER. He deliver, and possess you!
Why let him dare it:—he!—he must with me
In mortal contest first deserve the prize!
MARY. . You gave him not my letter? Then, indeed,
My hopes are lost!
MORTIMER. The coward loves his life.
Whoe'er would rescue you, and call you his,
Must boldly dare affront e'en death itself!
MARY. . Will he do nothing for me?
MORTIMER. Speak not of him.
What can he do? What need have we of him?
I will release you; I alone.
MARY. Alas!
What pow'r have you?
MORTIMER. Deceive yourself no more;
Think not your case is now as formerly;
The moment that the Queen thus quitted you,
And that your interview had ta'en this turn,
All hope was lost, each way of mercy shut.
Now deeds must speak, now boldness must decide;
To compass all must all be hazarded;
You must be free before the morning break.
MARY. . What say you, Sir—to-night?—impossible!
MORT. . Hear what has been resolv'd:—I led my friends
Into a private chapel, where a priest
Heard our confession, and, for ev'ry sin
We had committed, gave us absolution;
He gave us absolution too, beforehand,
For ev'ry crime we might commit in future;
He gave us too the final sacrament,
And we are ready for the final journey.

MARY. . O! what an awful, dreadful préparation!
MORT. . We scale, this very night, the castle's walls;
The keys are in my pow'r; the guards we murder!
Then from thy chamber bear thee forcibly.
Each living soul must die beneath our hands,
That none remain who might disclose the deed.
MARY. . And Drury, Paulet, my two keepers, they
Would sooner spill their dearest drop of blood.
MORT. . They fall the very first beneath my steel.
MARY. . What, Sir! Your uncle? How! Your second father!
MORT. . Must perish by my hand—I murder him!
MARY. O, bloody outrage!
MORTIMER. We have been absolv'd
Beforehand; I may perpetrate the worst;—
I can, I will do so!
MARY. O dreadful, dreadful!
MORT. . And should I be oblig'd to kill the Queen,
I've sworn upon the host, it must be done!
MARY. . No, Mortimer; ere so much blood for me.—
MORT. . What is the life of all, compar'd to thee,
And to my love? The bond which holds the world
Together may be loos'd, a second deluge
Come rolling on, and swallow all creation!
Henceforth I value nothing; ere I quit
My hold on thee, may earth and time be ended!
MARY (*retiring*).
Heav'ns! Sir, what language, and what looks! They
scare,
They frighten me!
MORTIMER (*with unsteady looks, expressive of quiet madness*).
Life 's but a moment—death
Is but a moment too. Why! let them drag me
To Tyburn, let them tear me limb from limb,
With red-hot pincers—
[*Violently approaching her with extended arms.*
If I clasp but thee
Within my arms, thou fervently belov'd!
MARY. . Madman, avaunt!
MORTIMER. To rest upon this bosom,
To press upon this passion-breathing mouth—
MARY. . Leave me, for God's sake, Sir; let me go in—
MORT. . He is a madman who neglects to clasp

His bliss in folds that never may be loosed,
When Heav'n has kindly giv'n it to his arms.
I will deliver you, and though it cost
A thousand lives, I do it: but I swear,
As God 's in Heav'n, I will possess you too!

MARY. . O! Will no God, no angel shelter me?
Dread destiny! thou throw'st me, in thy wrath,
From one tremendous terror to the other!
Was I then born to waken nought but frenzy?
Do hate and love conspire alike to fright me?

MORT. . Yes, glowing as their hatred is my love;
They would behead thee, they would wound this neck
So dazzling white, with the disgraceful axe!
O! offer to the living god of joy
What thou must sacrifice to bloody hate!
Inspire thy happy lover with those charms
Which are no more thine own. Those golden locks
Are forfeit to the dismal pow'rs of death,
O! use them to entwine thy slave for ever!

MARY. . Alas! alas! what language must I hear!
My wo, my suff'rings should be sacred to you,
Although my royal brows are so no more.

MORT. . The crown is fallen from thy brows, thou hast
No more of earthly majesty. Make trial,
Raise thy imperial voice, see if a friend,
If a deliverer will rise to save you.
Thy moving form alone remains, the high,
The godlike influence of thy heav'nly beauty;
This bids me venture all, this arms my hand
With might, and drives me tow'rds the headsman's axe

MARY. . O! Who will save me from his raging madness?

MORT. . Service that's bold, demands a bold reward.
Why shed their blood the daring? Is not life
Life's highest good? And he a madman, who
Casts life away? First will I take my rest,
Upon the breast that glows with love's own fire!
[*He presses her violently to his bosom.*

MARY. . Oh, must I call for help against the man
Who would deliver me!

MORTIMER. Thou'rt not unfeeling,
The world ne'er censur'd thee for frigid rigour;
The fervent pray'r of love can touch thy heart.

Thou mad'st the minstrel Rizzio blest, and gavest
Thyself a willing prey to Bothwell's arms.

MARY. . Presumptuous man!

MORTIMER. *He* was indeed thy tyrant,
Thou trembled'st at his rudeness, whilst thou lov'd'st him;
Well then—if only terror can obtain thee—
By the infernal gods!

MARY. Away—you're mad!

MORT. . I'll teach thee then before *me* too to tremble—

KENNEDY (*entering suddenly*).
They're coming—they approach—the Park is fill'd
With men in arms.

MORTIMER (*starting, and catching at his sword*).
I will defend you—I—

MARY. . O Hannah! save me, save me from his hands.
Where shall I find, poor suff'rer, an asylum?
O! to what saint shall I address my pray'rs?
Here force assails me, and within is murder!
[*She flies towards the house*, KENNEDY *follows her*

SCENE VII.

MORTIMER, PAULET, *and* DRURY *rush in in the greatest consternation.—Attendants hasten over the Stage.*

PAUL. . Shut all the portals—draw the bridges up—

MORT. . What is the matter, uncle?

PAULET. Where is the murd'ress?
Down with her, down into the darkest dungeon!

MORT. . What is the matter? What has pass'd?

PAULET. The Queen!
Accursed hand! Infernal machination!

MORT. . The Queen! What Queen?

PAUL. What Queen!
The Queen of England;—
She has been murder'd on the road to London.
[*Hastens into the house.*

SCENE VIII.

MORTIMER, *soon after*, O'KELLY.

MORTIMER (*after a pause*).
Am I then mad? Came not one running by
But now, and cried aloud, The Queen is murder'd!

No, no! I did but dream. A fev'rish fancy
Paints that upon my mind as true and real,
Which but existed in my frantic thoughts.
Who's there? It is O'Kelly. So dismay'd!

O'KELLY (*rushing in*).
Flee, Mortimer, O! flee—for all is lost!

MORT. . What then is lost?

O'KELLY. Stand not on question. Think
On speedy flight.

MORTIMER. What has occurred?

O'KELLY. Sauvage,
That madman, struck the blow.

MORTIMER. It is then true!

O'KEL. True, true—O! save yourself.

MORTIMER (*exultingly*).
The Queen is murder'd—
And Mary shall ascend the English throne!

O'KEL. Is murder'd! Who said that?

MORTIMER. Yourself.

O'KELLY. She lives,
And I, and you, and all of us are lost.

MORT. . She lives!

O'KELLY. The blow was badly aim'd, her cloak
Receiv'd it. Shrewsbury disarm'd the murd'rer.

MORT. . She lives!

O'KELLY. She lives to whelm us all in ruin;
Come, they surround the park already; come—

MORT. . Who did this frantic deed?

O'KELLY. It was the monk
From Toulon, whom you saw immers'd in thought,
As in the chapel the Pope's bull was read,
Which pour'd anathemas upon the Queen.
He wish'd to take the nearest, shortest way,
To free, with one bold stroke, the church of God,
And gain the crown of martrydom:—he trusted
His purpose only to the priest, and struck
The fatal blow upon the road to London.

MORTIMER (*after a long silence*).
Alas! a fierce destructive fate pursues thee,
Unhappy one! Yes—now thy death is fix'd;
Thy very angel has prepar'd thy fall!

O'KEL. Say, whither will you take your flight? I go
To hide me in the forests of the north.
MORT. Fly thither, and may God attend your flight;
I will remain, and still attempt to save
My love; if not, my bed shall be upon her grave.
[*Exeunt at different sides.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Antechamber.*

COUNT AUBESPINE, *the* EARLS *of* KENT *and* LEICESTER.

AUB. How fares her Majesty? My Lords, you see me
Still stunn'd, and quite beside myself for terror?
How happen'd it? How was it possible
That, in the midst of this most loyal people—
LEIC. The deed was not attempted by the people.
The assassin was a subject of your king,
A Frenchman.
AUBESPINE. Sure a lunatic.
LEIC. A Papist,
Count Aubespine!

SCENE II.

Enter BURLEIGH *in conversation with* DAVISON.

BURLEIGH. Sir; let the death-warrant
Be instantly made out, and pass the seal;
Then let it be presented to the Queen;
Her Majesty must sign it. Hasten, Sir,
We have no time to lose.
DAVISON. It shall be done. [*Exit.*
AUB. My Lord High Treasurer, my faithful heart
Shares in the just rejoicings of the realm.
Prais'd be almighty Heaven, who hath averted
Assassination from our much-lov'd Queen!
BUR. Prais'd be his name, who thus hath turn'd to scorn
The malice of our foes!
AUBESPINE. May Heav'n confound
The perpetrator of this cursed deed!
BUR. Its perpetrator and its base contriver!
AUB. Please you, my Lord, to bring me to the Queen,
That I may lay the warm congratulations
Of my imperial master at her feet.

BUR. There is no need of this.
AUBESPINE (*officiously*). My Lord of Burleigh,
I know my duty.
BURLEIGH. Sir, your duty is
To quit, and that without delay, this kingdom.
AUBESPINE (*stepping back with surprise*).
What! How is this?
BURLEIGH. The sacred character
Of an Ambassador to-day protects you,
But not to-morrow.
AUBESPINE. What's my crime?
BURLEIGH. Should I
Once name it, there were then no pardon for it.
AUB. I hope, my Lord, my charge's privilege—
BUR. Screens not a traitor.
LEICESTER *and* KENT. Traitor! How?
AUBESPINE. My Lord,
Consider well—
BURLEIGH. Your passport was discover'd
In the assassin's pocket.
KENT. Righteous Heaven!
AUB. Sir, many passports are subscrib'd by me,
I cannot know the secret thoughts of men.
BUR. He in your house confess'd, and was absolv'd—
AUB. My house is open—
BURLEIGH. To *our* enemies.
AUB. I claim a strict inquiry—
BURLEIGH. Tremble at it—
AUB. My monarch in my person is insulted,
He will annul the marriage contract.
BURLEIGH. *That*
My royal mistress has annull'd already;
England will not unite herself with France.
My Lord of Kent, I give to you the charge
To see Count Aubespine embark'd in safety.
The furious populace has storm'd his palace,
Where a whole arsenal of arms was found;
Should he be found, they 'll tear him limb from limb,
Conceal him till their fury is abated,—
You answer for his life

AUBESPINE. I go—I leave
This kingdom, where they sport with public treaties,
And trample on the laws of nations. Yet
My monarch, be assur'd, will vent his rage
In direst vengeance!

BURLEIGH. Let him seek it here.

[*Exeunt* KENT *and* AUBESPINE.

SCENE III

LEICESTER, BURLEIGH.

LEIC. . And thus you loose, yourself, the knot of union
Which you officiously, uncall'd for, bound!
You have deserv'd but little of your country,
My Lord; this trouble was superfluous.

BUR. . My aim was good, though fate declared against it;
Happy is he who has so fair a conscience!

LEIC. . Well know we the mysterious mien of Burleigh,
When he is on the hunt for deeds of treason.
Now you are in your element, my Lord;
A monstrous outrage has been just committed,
And darkness veils, as yet, its perpetrators:—
Now will a court of inquisition rise;
Each word, each look be weigh'd; men's very thoughts
Be summon'd to the bar. You are, my Lord,
The mighty man, the Atlas of the state,
All England's weight lies upon your shoulders.

BUR. . In you, my Lord, I recognise my master;
For such a victory as your eloquence
Has gain'd I cannot boast.

LEICESTER. What means your lordship?

BUR. . You were the man who knew, behind my back,
To lure the Queen to Fotheringay castle.

LEIC. . Behind your back! When did I fear to act
Before your face?

BURLEIGH. *You* led her Majesty?
O, no—*you* led her not—it was the Queen
Who was so gracious as to lead *you* thither

LEIC. . What do you mean, my Lord, by that?

BURLEIGH. The noble part
You forc'd the Queen to play! The glorious triumph
Which you prepar'd for her! Too gracious princess!
So shamelessly, so wantonly to mock

Thy unsuspecting goodness, to betray thee
So pitiless to thy exulting foe!
This, then, is the magnanimity, the grace
Which suddenly possess'd you in the council!
The Stuart is for this so despicable,
So weak an enemy, that it would scarce
Be worth the pains to stain us with her blood.
A specious plan! and sharply pointed too;
'Tis only pity this sharp point is broken.

LEIC. . Unworthy wretch!—this instant follow me,
And answer at the throne this insolence.

BUR. . You'll find me there, my Lord; and look you well,
That *there* your eloquence desert you not. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

LEICESTER, *alone; then* MORTIMER.

LEIC. . I am detected! All my plot 's disclos'd!
How has my evil genius track'd my steps!
Alas! if he has proofs, if she should learn
That I have held a secret correspondence
With her worst enemy; how criminal
Shall I appear to her! How false will then
My counsel seem, and all the fatal pains
I took to lure the Queen to Fotheringay!
I've shamefully betray'd, I have exposed her
To her detested enemy's revilings!
O! never, never can she pardon that.
All will appear as if premeditated.
The bitter turn of this sad interview,
The triumph and the tauntings of her rival;
Yes, e'en the murd'rous hand, which had prepar'd
A bloody, monstrous, unexpected fate;
All, all will be ascrib'd to my suggestions!
I see no rescue!—nowhere—Ha! Who comes?
[MORTIMER *enters, in the most violent uneasiness, and looks with apprehension round him.*

MORT. . Lord Leicester! Is it you? Are we alone?

LEIC. . Ill-fated wretch, away! What seek you here?

MORT. . They are upon our track—upon yours too,
Be vigilant!

LEICESTER. Away, away!

MORTIMER. They know,
That private conferences have been held
At Aubespine's—
LEICESTER. What's that to me?
MORTIMER They know, too,
That the assassin—
LEICESTER. That is your affair—
Audacious wretch! to dare to mix my name
In your detested outrage: go; defend
Your bloody deeds yourself!
MORTIMER. But only hear me.
LEICESTER (*violently enraged*).
Down, down to hell! Why cling you at my heels
Like an infernal spirit! I disclaim you—
I know you not—I make no common cause
With murderers!
MORTIMER. You will not hear me, then!
I came to warn you—*you* too are detected.
LEIC. How! What?
MORTIMER. Lord Burleigh went to Fotheringay,
Just as the luckless deed had been attempted;
Search'd with strict scrutiny the Queen's apartments,
And found there—
LEICESTER. What?
MORTIMER. A letter, which the Queen
Had just addressed to you—
LEICESTER. Unhappy woman!—
MORT. . In which she calls on you to keep your word,
Renews the promise of her hand, and mentions
The picture which she sent you.
LEICESTER. Death and hell!
MORT. . Lord Burleigh has the letter—
LEICESTER. I am lost!
[*During the following speech of* MORTIMER, LEICESTER *goes up and down, as in despair.*
MORT. . Improve the moment; be beforehand with him,
And save yourself—save her! An oath can clear
Your fame; contrive excuses to avert
The worst. *I* am disarm'd, can do no more;
My comrades are dispers'd—to pieces fall'n
Our whole confed'racy. For Scotland I,

To rally such new friends as there I may.
'Tis now your turn, my Lord—try what your weight,
What bold assurance can effect.

LEICESTER (*stops suddenly, as if resolved*). I will—
[*Goes to the door, opens it, and calls.*
Who waits without? Guards! seize this wretched traitor!
[*To the Officer, who comes in with soldiers.*
And guard him closely! A most dreadful plot
Is brought to light—I'll to her Majesty.

MORTIMER (*stands for a time petrified with wonder; collects himself soon, and follows* LEICESTER *with his looks expressive of the most sovereign contempt*).
Infamous wretch!—But I deserve it all.
Who told me then to trust this practis'd villain?
Now o'er my head he strides, and on my fall
He builds the bridge of safety!—be it so,
Go, save thyself—my lips are seal'd for ever;—
I will not join e'en thee in my destruction—
I would not own thee, no, not e'en in death;
Life is the faithless villain's only good!
[*To the Officer of the Guard, who steps forward to seize him.*
What wilt thou, slave of tyranny, with me?
I laugh to scorn thy threat'nings—I am free.
[*Drawing a dagger.*

OFFIC. He's arm'd;—rush in, and wrest his weapon from him.
[*They rush upon him, he defends himself.*

MORTIMER (*raising his voice*).
And in this latest moment, shall my heart
Expand itself in freedom, and my tongue
Shall break this long constraint. Curse and destruction
Light on you all, who have betray'd your faith,
Your God, and your true Sov'reign! Who, alike
To earthly Mary false as to the heav'nly,
Have sold your duties to this bastard Queen!

OFFIC. Hear you these blasphemies? Rush forward—seize him!

MORT.. Beloved Queen! I could not set thee free;
Yet take a lesson from me how to die.

Mary, thou holy one, O! pray for me!
And take me to thy heav'nly home on high!
[*Stabs himself, and falls into the arms of the Guard.*

SCENE V.

The Apartment of the Queen.

ELIZABETH, *with a letter in her hand*, BURLEIGH.

ELIZ. . To lure me thither! trifle with me thus!
The traitor! Thus to lead me, as in triumph,
Into the presence of his paramour!
O, Burleigh! ne'er was woman so deceiv'd.

BUR. . I cannot yet conceive what potent means,
What magic he exerted, to surprise
My Queen's accustom'd prudence.

ELIZABETH. O, I die
For shame! How must he laugh to scorn my weakness!
I thought to humble *her*, and was myself
The object of her bitter scorn.

BURLEIGH. By this
You see how faithfully I counsell'd you.

ELIZ. . O, I am sorely punish'd, that I turn'd
My ear from your wise counsels; yet I thought
I might confide in him. Who could suspect,
Beneath the vows of faithfullest devotion,
A deadly snare? In whom can I confide,
When he deceives me? He, whom I have made
The greatest of the great, and ever set
The nearest to my heart, and in this court
Allow'd to play the master and the king.

BUR. . Yet in that very moment he betray'd you,
Betray'd you to this wily Queen of Scots.

ELIZ. . O, she shall pay me for it with her life!
Is the death-warrant ready?

BURLEIGH. 'Tis prepar'd
As you commanded.

ELIZABETH. She shall surely die—
He shall behold her fall, and fall himself!
I've driven him from my heart. No longer love,
Revenge alone is there: and high as once
He stood, so low and shameful be his fall!

A monument of my severity,
As once the proud example of my weakness.
Conduct him to the Tower; let a commission
Of peers be nam'd to try him. He shall feel
In its full weight the rigour of the law.

BUR. . But he will seek thy presence; he will clear—

ELIZ. . How can he clear himself? Does not the letter
Convict him? O, his crimes are manifest!

BUR. . But thou art mild and gracious! His appearance,
His pow'rful presence—

ELIZABETH. I will never see him;
No never, never more. Are orders giv'n,
Not to admit him, should he come?

BURLEIGH. 'Tis done.

PAGE (*entering*).
The Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH. The presumptuous man!
I will not see him. Tell him that I will not.

PAGE. . I am afraid to bring my Lord this message,
Nor would he credit it.

ELIZABETH. And I have raised him
So high, that my own servants tremble more
At him than me!

BURLEIGH (*to the* PAGE). The Queen forbids his presence.
[*The* PAGE *retires slowly.*

ELIZABETH (*after a pause*).
Yet, if it still were possible? If he
Could clear himself? Might it not be a snare
Laid by the cunning one, to sever me
From my best friend—the ever treach'rous harlot!
She might have writ the letter, but to raise
Pois'nous suspicion in my heart, to ruin
The man she hates.

BURLEIGH. Yet, gracious Queen, consider—

SCENE VI.

LEICESTER (*bursts open the door with violence, and enters with an imperious air*).

LEIC. . Fain would I see the shameless man, who dares
Forbid me the apartments of my Queen!—

ELIZABETH (*avoiding his sight*).
Audacious slave!
LEICESTER. To turn me from the door!
If for a Burleigh she be visible,
She must be so to me!
BURLEIGH. My Lord, you are
Too bold, without permission to intrude—
LEIC. . My Lord, you are too arrogant, to take
The lead in these apartments. What! Permission!
I know of none, who stands so high at court
As to permit my doings, or refuse them.
[*Humbly approaching* ELIZABETH.
'Tis from my Sov'reign's lips alone that *I*—
ELIZABETH (*without looking at him*).
Out of my sight, deceitful, worthless traitor!
LEIC. . 'Tis not my gracious Queen I hear, but Burleigh,
My enemy, in these ungentle words.
To my imperial mistress I appeal;
Thou hast lent him thine ear; I ask the like.
ELIZ. . Speak, shameless wretch! Increase your crime—
deny it—
LEIC. . Dismiss this troublesome intruder first.
Withdraw, my Lord; it is not of your office
To play the third man here: between the Queen
And me there is no need of witnesses.
Retire—
ELIZABETH (*to* BURLEIGH)
Remain, my Lord; 'tis my command.
LEIC. . What has a third to do 'twixt thee and me?
I have to clear myself before my Queen,
My worshipp'd Queen; I will maintain the rights
Which thou hast given me: these rights are sacred,
And I insist upon it, that my Lord
Retire.
ELIZABETH. This haughty tone befits you well.
LEIC. . It well befits me; am not I the man,
The happy man, to whom thy gracious favour
Has giv'n the highest station? this exalts me
Above this Burleigh, and above them all.
Thy heart imparted me this rank, and what
Thy favour gave, by Heav'ns I will maintain

At my life's hazard! Let him go, it needs
Two moments only to exculpate me.

ELIZ. . Think not, with cunning words, to hide the truth.

LEIC . That fear from him, so voluble of speech:
But what I say, is to the heart address'd;
And I will justify what I have dar'd
To do, confiding in thy gen'rous favour,
Before thy heart alone. I recognise
No other jurisdiction.

ELIZABETH. Base deceiver!
'Tis this, e'en this, which above all condemns you.
My Lord, produce the letter. [*To* BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH. Here it is.

LEICESTER (*running over the letter without losing his presence of mind*).
'Tis Mary Stuart's hand—

ELIZABETH. Read, and be dumb!

LEICESTER (*having read it quietly*).
Appearance is against me; yet I hope
I shall not by appearances be judg'd.

ELIZ. . Can you deny your secret correspondence
With Mary?—that *she* sent, and *you* receiv'd
Her picture, that you gave her hopes of rescue?

LEIC. . It were an easy matter, if I felt
That I were guilty of a crime, to challenge
The testimony of my enemy:
Yet bold is my good conscience. I confess
That she hath said the truth.

ELIZABETH. Well then, thou wretch!

BUR. . His own words sentence him—

ELIZABETH. Out of my sight!
Away! Conduct the traitor to the tow'r!

LEIC. . I am no traitor; it was wrong, I own,
To make a secret of this step to thee;—
Yet pure was my intention, it was done
To search into her plots and to confound them

ELIZ. . Vain subterfuge!

BUR. . And do you think, my Lord—

LEIC. . I've play'd a dang'rous game, I know it well,
And none but Leicester dare be bold enough
To risk it at this court. The world must know

How I detest this Stuart, and the rank
Which here I hold, my monarch's confidence,
With which she honours me, must sure suffice
To overturn all doubt of my intentions.
Well may the man thy favour above all
Distinguishes, pursue a daring course
To do his duty!

BURLEIGH. If the course was good,
Wherefore conceal it?

LEICESTER. You are us'd, my Lord
To prate before you act—the very chime
Of your own deeds. This is your manner, Lord.
But mine, is first to act, and then to speak

BUR. Yes; now you speak, because you must.

LEICESTER (*measuring him proudly and disdainfully with his eyes*).

And *you*
Boast of a wonderful, a mighty action,
That *you* have sav'd the Queen, have snatch'd away
The mask from treach'ry:—all is known to *you;*
You think, forsooth, that nothing can escape
Your penetrating eyes. Poor, idle boaster!
In spite of all your cunning, Mary Stuart
Was free to day, had *I* not hinder'd it.

BUR. How? *you?*

LEICESTER. Yes *I*, my Lord: the Queen confided
In Mortimer; she open'd to the youth
Her inmost soul! Yes, she went farther still;
She gave him too a secret bloody charge,
Which Paulet had before refus'd with horror.
Say, is it so, or not?

[*The* QUEEN *and* BURLEIGH *look at one another with astonishment.*

BURLEIGH. Whence know you this?

LEIC. Nay, is it not a fact? Now answer me!
And where, my Lord, where were your thousand eyes,
Not to discover Mortimer was false?
That he, the Guise's tool, and Mary's creature,
A raging Papist, daring fanatic,
Was come to free the Stuart and to murder
The Queen of England!

ELIZABETH (*with the utmost astonishment*).
How! This Mortimer?
LEIC. . 'Twas he through whom our correspondence pass'd;
This plot it was which introduc'd me to him.
This very day she was to have been torn
From her confinement; he, this very moment,
Disclos'd his plan to me: I took him pris'ner,
And gave him to the guard, when in despair
To see his work o'erturn'd, himself unmask'd,
He slew himself!
ELIZABETH. O, I indeed have been
Deceiv'd beyond example, Mortimer!
BUR. . . This happen'd then but now? Since last we parted?
LEIC. . For my own sake, I must lament the deed—
That he was thus cut off. His testimony,
Were he alive, had fully clear'd my fame,
And freed me from suspicion:—'twas for this
That I surrender'd him to open justice.
I thought to choose the most impartial course
To verify and fix my innocence
Before the world.
BURLEIGH. He kill'd himself, you say!
Is't so? Or did you kill him?
LEICESTER. Vile suspicion!
Hear but the guard who seiz'd him.
[*He goes to the door, and calls.*
Ho! Who waits?
[*Enter the Officer of the guard.*
Sir, tell the Queen how Mortimer expir'd.
OFFIC. . I was on duty in the palace porch,
When suddenly my Lord threw wide the door,
And order'd me to take the knight in charge,
Denouncing him a traitor: upon this
He grew enrag'd, and with most bitter curses
Against our sov'reign, and our holy faith,
He drew a dagger, and before the guards
Could hinder his intention, plung'd the steel
Into his heart, and fell a lifeless corpse.
LEIC. . 'Tis well; you may withdraw. Her Majesty
Has heard enough.
[*The Officer withdraws.*

ELIZABETH. O! what a deep abyss
Of monstrous deeds!
LEICESTER. Who was it then, my Queen,
Who sav'd you? Was it Burleigh? Did he know
The dangers which surrounded you? Did he
Avert them from your head? Your faithful Leicester
Was your good angel.
BURLEIGH. This same Mortimer
Died most conveniently for *you*, my Lord.
ELIZ. . What I should say I know not. I believe you,
And I believe you not:—I think you guilty,
And yet I think you not. A curse on her
Who caus'd me all this anguish!
LEICESTER. She must die—
I now myself consent unto her death.
I formerly advis'd you to suspend
The sentence, till some arm should rise anew
On her behalf; the case has happen'd now,
And I demand her instant execution.
BUR. . . You give this counsel? *You?*
LEICESTER. Howe'er it wound
My feelings to be forc'd to this extreme,
Yet now I see most clearly, now I feel
That the Queen's welfare asks this bloody victim.
'Tis my proposal, therefore, that the writ
Be drawn at once, to fix the execution.
BURLEIGH (*to the* QUEEN).
Since then his lordship shows such earnest zeal,
Such loyalty, 'twere well, were he appointed
To see the execution of the sentence.
LEIC. . Who? *I?*
BURLEIGH. Yes, *you;* you surely ne'er could find
A better means to shake off the suspicion
Which rests upon you still, than to command
Her, whom 'tis said you love, to be beheaded.
ELIZABETH (*looking stedfastly at* LEICESTER).
My Lord advises well. So be it then!
LEIC. . It were but fit that my exalted rank
Should free me from so mournful a commission,
Which would indeed, in ev'ry sense, become
A Burleigh better than the Earl of Leicester.
The man who stands so near the royal person

Should have no knowledge of such fatal scenes:
But yet, to prove my zeal, to satisfy
My Queen, I wave my charge's privilege,
And take upon myself this hateful duty.

ELIZ. . Lord Burleigh shall partake this duty with you.
[*To* BURLEIGH.

So be the warrant instantly prepar'd.
[BURLEIGH *withdraws; a tumult heard without.*

SCENE VII.

The QUEEN, *the* EARL OF KENT.

ELIZ. . How now, my Lord of Kent? What uproar 's this,
I hear without?

KENT. . My Queen, it is thy people,
Who, round the palace rang'd, impatiently
Demand to see their sov'reign.

ELIZABETH. What 's their wish?

KENT. . A panic terror has already spread
Through London, that thy life has been attempted;
That murderers commission'd from the Pope
Beset thee; that the Catholics have sworn
To rescue from her prison Mary Stuart,
And to proclaim her Queen. Thy loyal people
Believe it, and are mad—her head alone
Can quiet them—this day must be her last.

ELIZ. . How! Will they force me then?

KENT. . They are resolv'd—

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH *and* DAVISON, *with a paper.*

ELIZ. . Well, Davison?

DAV. . (*approaches earnestly*).
Your orders are obey'd,
My Queen—

ELIZABETH. What orders, Sir?
[*As she is about to take the paper, she shudders, and starts back.*
O God!—

BURLEIGH. Obey
Thy people's voice; it is the voice of God.

ELIZABETH (*irresolute, as if in contest with herself*).
O my good Lord, who will assure me now

That what I hear is my whole people's voice,
The voice of all the world! Ah! much I fear,
That, if I now should listen to the wish
Of the wild multitude, a diff'rent voice
Might soon be heard;—and that the very men,
Who now by force oblige me to this step,
May, when 'tis taken, heavily condemn me!

Scene IX.

Enter the Earl of Shrewsbury (*who enters with great emotion*).

Hold fast, my Queen, they wish to hurry thee;
[*Seeing* Davison *with the paper.*
Be firm—Or is it then decided?—is it
Indeed decided? I behold a paper
Of ominous appearance in his hand;
Let it not at this moment meet thy eyes,
My Queen!—

Eliz. Good Shrewsbury! I am constrain'd—

Shrew. Who can constrain thee? Thou art Queen of England,
Here must thy Majesty assert its rights:
Command those savage voices to be silent,
Who take upon themselves to put constraint
Upon thy royal will, to rule thy judgment.
Fear only, blind conjecture, moves thy people;
Thou art thyself beside thyself; thy wrath
Is grievously provok'd: thou art but mortal,
And canst not thus ascend the judgment seat.

Bur. Judgment has long been past. It is not now
The time to speak, but execute the sentence.

Kent (*who, on* Shrewsbury's *entry, had retired, comes back*).
The tumult gains apace; there are no means
To moderate the people

Elizabeth (*to* Shrewsbury). See, my Lord,
How they press on.

Shrewsbury. I only ask a respite;
A single word trac'd by thy hand decides
The peace, the happiness of all thy life!
Thou hast for years consider'd, let not then
A moment rul'd by passion hurry thee—
But a short respite—recollect thyself!
Wait for a moment of tranquillity.

BURLEIGH (*violently*).

Wait for it—pause—delay—till flames of fire
Consume the realm; until the fifth attempt
Of murder be successful! God, indeed,
Hath thrice deliver'd thee; thy late escape
Was marvellous, and to expect again
A miracle, would be to tempt thy God!

SHREW. That God, whose potent hand hath thrice preserv'd thee,
Who lent my aged feeble arm the strength
To overcome the madman:—he deserves
Thy confidence. I will not raise the voice
Of justice now, for now is not the time;
Thou canst not hear it in this storm of passion.
Yet listen but to this! Thou tremblest now
Before this living Mary—tremble rather
Before the murder'd, the beheaded Mary.
She will arise, and quit her grave, will range
A fiend of discord, an avenging ghost
Around thy realm, and turn thy people's hearts
From their allegiance. For as yet the Britons
Hate her, because they fear her; but most surely
Will they avenge her, when she is no more.
They will no more behold the enemy
Of their belief, they will but see in her
The much-lamented issue of their kings
A sacrifice to jealousy and hate.
Then quickly shalt thou see the sudden change
When thou hast done the bloody deed; then go
Through London, seek thy people, which till now
Around thee swarm'd delighted; thou shalt see
Another England, and another people;
For then no more the godlike dignity
Of justice, which subdued thy subjects' hearts,
Will beam around thee. Fear, the dread ally
Of tyranny, will shudd'ring march before thee,
And make a wilderness in ev'ry street—
The last, extremest crime thou hast committed.
What head is safe, if the anointed fall?

ELIZ. . Ah! Shrewsbury, you sav'd my life, you turn'd
The murd'rous steel aside; why let you not

The dagger take its course? then all these broils
Would have been ended; then, releas'd from doubt,
And free from blame, I should be now at rest
In my still peaceful grave. In very sooth,
I'm weary of my life, and of my crown.
If Heav'n decree that one of us two Queens
Must perish, to secure the other's life—
And sure it must be so—why should not I
Be she who yields? My people must decide;
I give them back the Sovereignty they gave.
God is my witness, that I have not liv'd
For my own sake, but for my people's welfare.
If they expect from this false, fawning Stuart,
The younger sovereign, more happy days,
I will descend with pleasure from the throne,
Again repair to Woodstock's quiet bowers,
Where once I spent my unambitious youth;
Where far remov'd from all the vanities
Of earthly power, I found within myself
True Majesty. I am not made to rule—
A ruler should be made of sterner stuff:
My heart is soft and tender. I have govern'd
These many years, this kingdom happily,
But then I only needed to make happy:
Now, comes my first important regal duty,
And now I feel how weak a thing I am.

BUR. Now by mine honour, when I hear my Queen,
My royal liege, speak such unroyal words,
I should betray my office, should betray
My country, were I longer to be silent.
You say you love your people 'bove yourself,
Now prove it. Choose not peace for your own heart,
And leave your kingdom to the storms of discord.
Think on the church. Shall, with this Papist Queen,
The ancient superstition be renew'd?
The monk resume his sway, the Roman legate
In pomp march hither; lock our churches up,
Dethrone our monarchs? I demand of you
The souls of all your subjects—as you now
Shall act, they all are sav'd, or all are lost!
Here is no time for mercy;—to promote
Your people's welfare is your highest duty.

If Shrewsbury has sav'd your life, then I
Will save both you, and England—that is more!

ELIZ. I would be left alone. No consolation,
No counsel, can be drawn from human aid
In this conjuncture:—I will lay my doubts
Before the Judge of all:—I am resolv'd
To act as He shall teach. Withdraw, my Lords.

[*To* DAVISON, *who lays the paper on the table.*

You, Sir, remain in waiting—close at hand.

[*The Lords withdraw;* SHREWSBURY *alone stands for a few moments before the* QUEEN, *regards her significantly, then withdraws slowly, and with an expression of the deepest anguish.*

SCENE X.

ELIZABETH *alone.*

O! servitude of popularity!
Disgraceful slavery! How weary am I
Of flattering this idol, which my soul
Despises in its inmost depth! O! when
Shall I once more be free upon this throne?
I must respect the people's voice, and strive
To win the favour of the multitude,
And please the fancies of a mob, whom nought
But jugglers' tricks delight. O call not him
A king, who needs must please the world: 'tis he
Alone, who in his actions does not heed
The fickle approbation of mankind.
Have I then practis'd justice, all my life
Shunn'd each despotic deed; have I done this,
Only to bind my hands against this first,
This necessary act of violence?
My own example now condemns myself!
Had I but been a tyrant, like my sister,
My predecessor, I could fearless then
Have shed this royal blood:—but am I now
Just by my own free choice? No—I was forc'd
By stern necessity to use this virtue;
Necessity, which binds e'en monarchs' wills.
Surrounded by my foes, my people's love
Alone supports me on my envied throne.
All Europe's pow'rs confederate to destroy me;

The Pope's inveterate decree declares me
Accurst and excommunicated. France
Betrays me with a kiss, and Spain prepares
At sea a fierce exterminating war;
Thus stand I, in contention with the world,
A poor defenceless woman: I must seek
To veil the spot in my imperial birth,
By which my father cast disgrace upon me:
In vain with princely virtues would I hide it;
The envious hatred of my enemies
Uncovers it, and places Mary Stuart
A threat'ning fiend before me evermore!
[*Walking up and down, with quick and agitated steps.*
O no! this fear must end. Her head must fall!
I *will* have peace. She is the very fury
Of my existence; a tormenting demon,
Which destiny has fasten'd on my soul.
Wherever I had planted me a comfort,
A flatt'ring hope, my way was ever cross'd
By this infernal viper! She has torn
My fav'rite, and my destined bridegroom from me.
The hated name of ev'ry ill I feel
Is Mary Stuart—were but she no more
On earth, I should be free as mountain air.
[*Standing still.*
With what disdain did she look down on me,
As if her eye should blast me like the lightning!
Poor feeble wretch! I bear far other arms,
Their touch is mortal, and thou art no more.
[*Advancing to the table hastily, and taking the pen.*
I am a bastard am I? Hapless wretch,
I am but so the while thou liv'st and breath'st.
[Thy death will make my birth legitimate.]
The moment I destroy thee, is the doubt
Destroy'd, which hangs o'er my imperial right.
As soon as England has no other choice,
My mother's honour and my birthright triumphs!
[*She signs with resolution; lets her pen then fall, and steps back with an expression of terror.—After a pause she rings.*

Scene XI.

Elizabeth, Davison.

Eliz. . Where are their Lordships?

Davison. They are gone to quell
The tumult of the people. The alarm
Was instantly appeas'd, when they beheld
The Earl of Shrewsbury. That 's he! exclaim'd
A hundred voices—that 's the man—he sav'd
The Queen; hear *him*—the bravest man in England!
And now began the gallant Talbot, blam'd
In gentle words the people's violence,
And used such strong, persuasive eloquence,
That all were pacified, and silently
They slunk away.

Elizabeth. The fickle multitude!
Which turns with ev'ry wind. Unhappy he
Who leans upon this reed! 'Tis well, Sir William;
You may retire again—
[*As he is going towards the door.*
And, Sir, this paper,
Receive it back; I place it in your hands.

Davison (*casts a look upon the paper, and starts back*).
My gracious Queen—thy name!—'tis then decided.

Eliz. . I had but to subscribe it—I have done so—
A paper sure cannot decide—a name
Kills not—

Davison. Thy name, my Queen, beneath this paper,
Is most decisive—kills—'tis like the lightning,
Which blasteth as it flies! This fatal scroll
Commands the Sheriff and Commissioners
To take departure straight for Fotheringay,
And to the Queen of Scots announce her death,
Which must at dawn be put in execution.
There is no respite, no discretion, here—
As soon as I have parted with this writ,
Her race is run—

Elizabeth. Yes, Sir, the Lord has plac'd
This weighty bus'ness in your feeble hands;
Seek him in pray'r, to light you with his wisdom;
I go—and leave you, Sir, to do your duty. [*Going.*

DAV... No; leave me not, my Queen, till I have heard
Your will. The only wisdom that I need
Is, word for word, to follow your commands.
Say, have you plac'd this warrant in my hands,
To see that it be speedily enforced?
ELIZ. . That you must do, as your own prudence dictates.
DAVISON (*interrupting her quickly, and alarmed*).
Not mine—O God forbid! Obedience is
My only prudence here. No point must now
Be left to be decided by your servant.
A small mistake would here be regicide,
A monstrous crime, from which my soul recoils!
Permit me, in this weighty act, to be
Your passive instrument, without a will;—
Tell me in plain undoubted terms your pleasure,
What with the bloody mandate I should do.
ELIZ. . Its name declares its meaning.
DAVISON. Do you, then,
My Liege, command its instant execution?
ELIZ. . I said not that; I tremble but to think it.
DAV... Shall I retain it, then, 'till further orders?
ELIZ. . At your own risk; you answer the event.
DAV... I!—gracious Heavens!—O speak, my Queen, your pleasure!
ELIZ. . My pleasure is, that this unhappy bus'ness
Be no more mention'd to me; that at last
I may be freed from it, and that for ever.
DAV... It costs you but a word—determine then;
What shall I do with this mysterious scroll?
ELIZ. . I *have* declar'd it, plague me, Sir, no longer.
DAV... You *have* declar'd it? say you? O, my Queen,
You have said nothing. Please my gracious mistress
But to remember—
ELIZABETH (*stamps on the ground*).
Insupportable!
DAV... O, be indulgent to me! I have enter'd
Unwittingly, not many months ago,
Upon this office; I know not the language
Of courts and kings. I ever have been rear'd
In simple, open wise, a plain blunt man
Be patient with me; nor deny your servant

A light to lead him clearly to his duty.
[*He approaches her in a supplicating posture, she turns her back on him; he stands in despair; then speaks with a tone of resolution.*
Take, take again this paper—take it back!
Within my hands, it is a glowing fire.
Select not me, my Queen; select not me
To serve you, in this terrible conjuncture.

ELIZ. . Go, Sir;—fulfil the duty of your office! [*Exit*

SCENE XII.

DAVISON, *then* BURLEIGH.

DAV... She goes! She leaves me doubting, and perplex'd
With this dread paper! How to act I know not;
Should I retain it, should I forward it?
[*To* BURLEIGH, *who enters.*
Oh! I am glad that you are come, my Lord,
'Tis you who have preferr'd me to this charge;
Now free me from it, for I undertook it,
Unknowing how responsible it made me.
Let me then seek again th' obscurity
In which you found me; this is not my place.

BUR. . . How now? Take courage, Sir! Where is the warrant?
The Queen was with you.

DAVISON. She has quitted me
In bitter anger. O advise me, help me,
Save me from this fell agony of doubt!
My Lord, here is the warrant: it is sign'd!

BUR. . . Indeed? O give it, give it me!

DAVISON. I may not.

BUR. . . How!

DAV. . . She has not yet explain'd her final will.

BUR. . . Explain'd! She has subscrib'd it;—give it me.

DAV. . . I am to execute it, and I am not.
Great Heavens! I know not what I am to do!

BURLEIGH (*urging more violently*).
It must be now, this moment, executed—
The warrant, Sir. You're lost if you delay.

DAV. . . So am I also, if I act too rashly.

BUR. . . What strange infatuation. Give it me.
[*Snatches the paper from him, and exit with it.*

DAV. . . What would you? Hold! You will be my destruction!

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Scene the same as in the First Act.

HANNAH KENNEDY *in deep mourning, her eyes still red from weeping in great but quiet anguish, is employed in sealing letters and parcels. Her sorrow often interrupts her occupation, and she is seen at such intervals to pray in silence.* PAULET *and* DRURY, *also in mourning, enter, followed by many servants, who bear golden and silver vessels, mirrors, paintings, and other valuables, and fill the back part of the stage with them:* PAULET *delivers to the Nurse a box of jewels and a paper, and seems to inform her by signs, that it contains the inventory of the effects the* QUEEN *had brought with her. At the sight of these riches, the anguish of the Nurse is renewed; she sinks into a deep, gloomy melancholy, during which* DRURY, PAULET, *and the Servants, silently retire.*

MELVIL *enters.*

KENNEDY (*screams aloud, as soon as she observes him*).
Melvil! Is't you? Behold I you again?
MEL. . Yes, faithful Kennedy, we meet once more.
KEN. . After this long, long, painful separation!
MEL. . A most unhappy, bitter meeting, this!
KEN. . You come—
MELVIL. To take an everlasting leave
Of my dear Queen—to bid a last farewell!
KEN. . And now at length, now on the fatal morn
Which brings her death, they grant our royal Lady
The presence of her friends. O, worthy Sir,
I will not question you, how you have far'd,
Nor tell you all the suff'rings we've endured,
Since you were torn away from us:—alas!
There will be time enough for that hereafter.
O, Melvil, Melvil, why was it our fate
To see the dawn of this unhappy day!
MEL. . Let us not melt each other with our grief.
Throughout my whole remaining life, as long
As ever it may be, I'll sit and weep;

A smile shall never more light up these cheeks,
Ne'er will I lay this sable garb aside,
But lead henceforth a life of endless mourning.
Yet on this last sad day, I will be firm;
Pledge me your word to moderate your grief;
And when the rest, of comfort all bereft,
Abandon'd to despair, wail round her, we
Will lead her with heroic resolution,
And be her staff upon the road to death!

KEN. . Melvil! You are deceiv'd, if you suppose
The Queen has need of our support to meet
Her death with firmness. *She* it is, my friend,
Who will exhibit the undaunted heart.
O! trust me, Mary Stuart will expire
As best becomes a Heroine and Queen!

MEL. . Receiv'd she firmly, then, the sad decree
Of death?—'tis said, that she was not prepar'd.

KEN. . She was not; yet they were far other terrors
Which made our Lady shudder: 'twas not death,
But her deliverer, which made her tremble.
Freedom was promis'd us; this very night
Had Mortimer engag'd to bear us hence:
And thus the Queen, perplex'd 'twixt hope and fear,
And doubting still if she should trust her honour
And royal person to th' advent'rous youth,
Sat waiting for the morning. On a sudden
We hear a boist'rous tumult in the castle;
Our ears are startled by repeated blows
Of many hammers, and we think we hear
The approach of our deliv'rers:—hope salutes us,
And suddenly and unresisted, wakes
The sweet desire of life And now at once
The portals are thrown open—it is Paulet,
Who comes to tell us—that—the carpenters
Erect beneath our feet the murd'rous scaffold!

[*She turns aside, overpowered by excessive anguish.*

MEL. . O God in Heav'n! O tell me then, how bore
The Queen this terrible vicissitude?

KENNEDY (*after a pause, in which she has somewhat collected herself*).

Not by degrees can we relinquish life;

Quick, sudden, in the twinkling of an eye
The separation must be made, the change
From temporal, to eternal life;—and God
Imparted to our mistress at this moment
His grace, to cast away each earthly hope,
And firm and full of faith to mount the skies.
No sign of pallid fear dishonour'd her;
No word of mourning, 'till she heard the tidings
Of Leicester's shameful treach'ry, the sad fate
Of the deserving youth, who sacrificed
Himself for her: the deep, the bitter anguish
Of that old knight, who lost, through her, his last,
His only hope; till then she shed no tear,—
'Twas then her tears began to flow, 'twas not
Her own, but others' wo which wrung them from her.

MEL. . Where is she now? Can you not lead me to her?

KEN. . She spent the last remainder of the night
In pray'r, and from her dearest friends she took
Her last farewell in writing:—then she wrote
Her will* with her own hand. She now enjoys
A moment of repose, the latest slumber
Refreshes her weak spirits.

MELVIL . Who attends her?

KEN. . None but her women and physician Burgoyn:
You seem to look around you with surprise;
Your eyes appear to ask me what should mean
This show of splendour in the house of death.
O, Sir, while yet we lived we suffer'd want;
But at our death plenty returns to us.

SCENE II.

Enter MARGARET CURL.

KEN. . How, Madam, fares the Queen? Is she awake?

CURL (*drying her tears*).
She is already dressed—she asks for you.

KEN. . I go;—
[*To* MELVIL, *who seems to wish to accompany her.*
But follow not, until the Queen
Has been prepar'd to see you. [*Exit.*

CURL. Melvil, sure,
The ancient steward?

* The document is now in the British Museum.

MELVIL. Yes, the same
CURL. O, Sir,
This is a house which needs no steward now!
Melvil, you come from London; can you give
No tidings of my husband?
MELVIL. It is said
He will be set at liberty, as soon—
CURL. . As soon as our dear Queen shall be no more.
O, the unworthy, the disgraceful traitor!
He is our Lady's murderer—'tis said
It was his testimony which condemn'd her.
MEL. . 'Tis true
CURL. O, curse upon him!—be his soul
Condemn'd for ever!—he has borne false witness—
MEL. . Think, Madam, what you say.
CURL. . I will maintain it
With ev'ry sacred oath, before the court,
I will repeat it in his very face;
The world shall hear of nothing else. I say
That she dies innocent!
MELVIL. God grant it true!

SCENE III.

Enter HANNAH KENNEDY.

KENNEDY (*to* CURL).
Go, Madam, and require a cup of wine—
'Tis for our Lady.
MELVIL. Is the Queen then sick?
KEN. . She thinks that she is strong; she is deceiv'd
By her heroic courage; she believes
She has no need of nourishment; yet still
A hard and painful task 's allotted her.
Her enemies shall not enjoy the triumph;
They shall not say that fear hath blanch'd her cheeks,
When her fatigues have conquer'd human weakness.
MEL. . May I approach her?
KENNEDY. She will come herself.

SCENE IV.

Enter BURGOYN; *two women of the chamber follow him, weeping, and in deep mourning.*

BURG. . O, Melvil!

MELVIL. O, Burgoyn! [*They embrace silently.*
FIRST WOMAN (*to the* NURSE). She chose to be
Alone:—she wishes, at this awful moment,
For the last time, to commune with her God.

SCENE V.

Enter MARGARET CURL, *bearing a golden cup of wine; she places it hastily upon the table, and leans, pale and trembling, against a chair.*

MEL. . How, Madam! What has frighten'd you?
KENNEDY. O God!
BURG. . Speak, Madam.
CURL. What, alas! have I beheld!
MEL. . Come to yourself, and say what you have seen!
CURL. . As I went down the staircase which conducts
To the great hall below, a door stood open;
I look'd into the chamber, and I saw—
O Heav'n!
MELVIL. What saw you?
CURL. All the walls were hung
With black; a spacious scaffold too o'erspread
With sable cloth, was rais'd above the floor,
And in the middle of the scaffold stood
A dreadful sable block! upon it lay
A naked, polish'd axe:—the hall was full
Of cruel people, crowding round the scaffold;
Who, with a horrid thirst for human blood,
Seem'd waiting for the victim!
THE WOMEN. Gracious Heav'n
Protect our Queen!
MELVIL. Be calm; the Queen approaches.

SCENE VI.

Enter MARY *in white and sumptuously arrayed, as for a festival: she wears hanging from her neck, on a row of small beads an Agnus Dei; a rosary hangs from her girdle; she bears a crucifix in her hand, and a diadem of precious stones binds her hair; her large black veil is thrown back. On her entrance, all present fall back on both sides with the most violent expressions of anguish.* MELVIL *falls involuntarily upon his knees.*

MARY (*with quiet majesty, looking round the whole circle*).
Why these complaints? Why weep ye? Ye should rather
Rejoice with me, that now at length the end
Of my long wo approaches; that my shackles
Fall off, my prison opens, and my soul
Delighted mounts on seraph's wings, and seeks
The land of everlasting liberty.
When I was offer'd up to the oppression
Of my proud enemy, was forc'd to suffer
Ignoble taunts, and insults most unfitting
A free and sov'reign Queen, then was the time
To weep for me; but, as an earnest friend,
Beneficent and healing Death approaches.
All the indignities which I have suffer'd
On earth, are cover'd by his sable wings.
The most degraded criminal 's ennobled
By his last suff'rings, by his final exit;
I feel again the crown upon my brows.
And dignity possess my swelling soul!
[*Advancing a few steps.*
How! Melvil here! My worthy Sir, not so;
Arise; you rather come in time to see
The triumph of your mistress, than her death.
One comfort, which I never had expected,
Is granted me, that, after death, my name
Will not be quite abandon'd to my foes;
One friend at least, one partner of my faith,
Will be my witness in the hour of death.
Say, honest Melvil, how you far'd the while
In this inhospitable, hostile land?
For since the time they tore you from my side,
My fears for you have oft depress'd my soul.

MEL. No other evil gall'd me, but my grief
For thee, and that I wanted pow'r to serve thee.

MARY. How fares my chamberlain, old Didier?
But sure the faithful servant long has slept
The sleep of death, for he was full of years.

MEL. God hath not granted him as yet this grace;
He lives to see the grave o'erwhelm thy youth.

MARY. O! Could I but have felt before my death,

The happiness of pressing one descendant
Of the dear blood of Stuart to my bosom.
But I must suffer in a foreign land,
None but my servants to bewail my fate!
Sir; to your loyal bosom I commit
My latest wishes. Bear then, Sir, my blessing
To the most Christian king, my royal brother,
And the whole royal family of France.
I bless the cardinal, my honour'd uncle,
And also Henry Guise, my noble cousin.
I bless the holy Father, the vicegerent
Of Christ on earth, who will, I trust, bless me.
I bless the King of Spain, who nobly offer'd
Himself as my deliv'rer, my avenger.
They are remember'd in my will: I hope
That they will not despise, how poor soe'er
They be, the presents of a heart which loves them.
[*Turning to her servants.*
I have bequeath'd you to my royal brother
Of France; he will protect you, he will give you
Another country, and a better home;
And if my last desire have any weight,
Stay not in England; let no haughty Briton
Glut his proud heart with your calamities,
Nor see those in the dust, who once were mine.
Swear by this image of our suffring Lord,
To leave this fatal land. when I'm no more.

MELVIL (*touching the crucifix*).
I swear obedience, in the name of all.

MARY. What I, though poor and plunder'd, still possess,
Of which I am allow'd to make disposal,
Shall be amongst you shar'd; for I have hope
In this at least, my will may be fulfill'd.
And what I wear upon the way to death,
Is yours—nor envy me on this occasion,
The pomp of earth upon the road to heav'n.
[*To the ladies of her chamber.*
To you, my Alice, Gertrude, Rosamund,
I leave my pearls, my garments: you are young,
And ornament may still delight your hearts.
You, Margaret, possess the nearest claims,
To you I should be gen'rous: for I leave you

The most unhappy woman of them all.
That I have not aveng'd your husband's fault
On you, I hope my legacy will prove.
The worth of gold, my Hannah, charms not thee;
Nor the magnificence of precious stones:
My memory, I know will be to thee
The dearest jewel; take this handkerchief,
I work'd it for thee, in the hours of sorrow,
With my own hands, and my hot scalding tears
Are woven in the texture:—you will bind
My eyes with this, when it is time: this last
Sad service I would wish but from my Hannah.

KEN. O Melvil! I cannot support it.

MARY. Come,
Come all, and now receive my last farewell.

[*She stretches forth her hands; the* WOMEN *violently weeping, fall successively at her feet, and kiss her outstretched hand.*

Marg'ret farewell—my Alice, fare thee well;
Thanks Burgoyn, for thy honest faithful service—
Thy lips are hot, my Gertrude:—I have been
Much hated, yet have been as much belov'd.
May a deserving husband bless my Gertrude,
For this warm glowing heart is form'd for love.
Bertha, thy choice is better, thou hadst rather
Become the chaste and pious bride of heav'n;—
O! haste thee to fulfil thy vows;—the goods
Of earth are all deceitful;—thou may'st learn
This lesson from thy Queen. No more; farewell,
Farewell, farewell, my friends, farewell for ever.

[*She turns suddenly from them: all but* MELVIL *retire at different sides.*

SCENE VII.

MARY, MELVIL.

MARY (*after the others are all gone*).
I have arrang'd all temporal concerns,
And hope to leave the world in debt to none;
Melvil, one thought alone there is, which binds
My troubled soul, nor suffers it to fly
Delighted, and at liberty, to heav'n

MEL. . Disclose it to me; ease your bosom, trust
Your doubts, your sorrows to your faithful friend
MARY. . I see eternity's abyss before me;—
Soon must I stand before the highest judge
And have not yet appeas'd the Holy One.
A priest of my religion is denied me.
And I disdain to take the sacrament,
The holy, heav'nly nourishment, from priests
Of a false faith; I die in the belief
Of my own church, for that alone can save.
MEL. . Compose your heart; the fervent pious wish
Is priz'd in heaven as high as the performance.
The might of tyrants can but bind the hands,
The heart's devotion rises free to God,
The word is dead—'tis faith which brings to life.
MARY. . The heart is not sufficient of itself;
Our faith must have some earthly pledge to ground
Its claims to the high bliss of heav'n. For this
Our God became incarnate, and inclos'd
Mysteriously his unseen heav'nly grace
Within the outward figure of a body.
The church it is, the holy one, the high one,
Which rears for us the ladder up to heav'n:—
'Tis call'd the Catholic—apostolic church,—
For 'tis but gen'ral faith can strengthen faith;
Where thousands worship and adore, the heat
Breaks out in flame, and borne on eagle wings,
The soul mounts upwards to the heav'n of heav'ns.
Ah! happy they, who for the glad communion
Of pious pray'r, meet in the house of God!
The altar is adorn'd, the tapers blaze,
The bell invites, the incense soars on high,
The bishop stands enrob'd, he takes the cup,
And blessing it declares the solemn mystery,
The transformation of the elements;
And the believing people fall delighted
To worship and adore the present Godhead.
Alas! I only am debarr'd from this;
The heav'nly benediction pierces not
My prison walls: its comfort is denied me
MEL. . Yes! it can pierce them—put thy trust in Him
Who is almighty—in the hand of faith,

The wither'd staff can send forth verdant branches;
And he who from the rock call'd living water,
He can prepare an altar in this prison,
Can change—

[*Seizing the cup, which stands upon the table.*

The earthly contents of this cup
Into a substance of celestial grace.

MARY. Melvil! O yes, I understand you, Melvil!
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament;
But the Redeemer says, "When two or three
Are in my name assembled, I am with them."
What consecrates the priest? Say, what ordains him
To be the Lord's interpreter?—a heart
Devoid of guile, and a reproachless conduct.
Well, then, though unordain'd, be you my priest;
To you will I confide my last confession,
And take my absolution from your lips.

MEL. If then thy heart be with such zeal inflam'd,
I tell thee, that for thine especial comfort,
The Lord may work a miracle. Thou say'st
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament—
Thou err'st—here *is* a priest—here *is* a God;
A god descends to thee in real presence.

[*At these words he uncovers his head, and shows a host in a golden vessel.*

I am a priest—to hear thy last confession,
And to announce to thee the peace of God
Upon thy way to death. I have receiv'd
Upon my head the seven consecrations.
I bring thee, from his Holiness, this host,
Which, for thy use, himself has deign'd to bless.

MARY. Is then a heav'nly happiness prepar'd
To cheer me on the very verge of death?
As an immortal one on golden clouds
Descends, as once the angel from on high,
Deliver'd the Apostle from his fetters:—
He scorns all bars, he scorns the soldier's sword,
He steps undaunted through the bolted portals,
And fills the dungeon with his native glory;
Thus here the messenger of Heav'n appears,
When ev'ry earthly champion had deceiv'd me.
And you, my servant once, are now the servant

Of the Most High, and his immortal Word!
As before *me* your knees were wont to bend,
Before you humbled, now I kiss the dust.
[*She sinks before him on her knees*

MELVIL (*making over her the sign of the cross*).
Hear, Mary Queen of Scotland:—in the name
Of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Hast thou examin'd carefully thy heart,
Swear'st thou, art thou prepar'd in thy confession
To speak the truth before the God of truth?

MARY. . Before my God and thee, my heart lies open.

MEL. . What calls thee to the presence of the Highest?

MARY. . I humbly do acknowledge to have err'd
Most grievously, I tremble to approach,
Sullied with sin, the God of purity.

MEL. . Declare the sin which weighs so heavily
Upon thy conscience, since thy last confession.

MARY. . My heart was fill'd with thoughts of envious hate,
And vengeance took possession of my bosom.
I hope forgiveness of my sins from God,
Yet could I not forgive my enemy.

MEL. . Repent'st thou of the sin? Art thou, in sooth,
Resolv'd to leave this world at peace with all?

MARY. . As surely as I wish the joys of heav'n.

MEL. . What other sin hath arm'd thy heart against thee?

MARY. . Ah! not alone through hate; through lawless love
Have I still more abus'd the sov'reign good.
My heart was vainly turn'd towards the man,
Who left me in misfortune, who deceiv'd me.

MEL. . Repent'st thou of the sin? And hast thou turn'd
Thy heart, from this idolatry, to God?

MARY. . It was the hardest trial I have pass'd;
This last of earthly bonds is torn asunder.

MEL. . What other sin disturbs thy guilty conscience?

MARY. . A bloody crime, indeed of ancient date,
And long ago confess'd; yet with new terrors
It now attacks me, black and grisly steps
Across my path, and shuts the gates of heav'n:
By my connivance fell the king, my husband—
I gave my hand and heart to a seducer—
By rigid penance I have made atonement;
Yet in my soul the worm is gnawing still.

MEL. . Has then thy heart no other accusation,
Which hath not been confess'd and wash'd away?
MARY. . All you have heard, with which my heart is charg'd.
MEL. . Think on the presence of Omniscience;
Think on the punishments, with which the church
Threatens imperfect, and reserv'd confession!
This is the sin to everlasting death,
For this is sinning 'gainst his Holy Spirit.
MARY. . So may eternal grace with victory
Crown my last contest, as I wittingly
Have nothing hid—
MELVIL. How? Wilt thou then conceal
The crime from God, for which thou art condemn'd?
Thou tell'st me nothing of the share thou hadst
In Babington, and Parry's bloody treason:
Thou diest for this a temporal death; for this
Wilt thou too die the everlasting death?
MARY. . I am prepar'd to meet eternity;
Within the narrow limits of an hour,
I shall appear before my judge's throne;
But, I repeat it, my confession's ended.
MEL. . Consider well—the heart is a deceiver.
Thou hast perhaps, with sly equivocation,
The *word* avoided, which would make thee guilty.
Although thy will was party to the crime.
Remember, that no juggler's tricks can blind
The eye of fire which darts through ev'ry breast.
MARY . 'Tis true, that I have call'd upon all princes
To free me from unworthy chains; yet 'tis
As true, that neither by intent or deed,
Have I attempted my oppressor's life.
MEL. . Your secretaries then have witness'd falsely.
MARY. . It is, as I have said;—what they have witness'd
The Lord will judge.
MELVIL. Thou mount'st then, satisfied
Of thy own innocence, the fatal scaffold?
MARY. . God suffers me in mercy to atone,
By undeserved death, my youth's transgressions.
MELVIL (*making over her the sign of the cross*).
Go, then, and expiate them all by death;
Sink a devoted victim on the altar,
Thus shall thy blood atone the blood thou 'st spilt.

From female frailty were deriv'd thy faults,
Free from the weakness of mortality,
The spotless spirit seeks the blest abodes.
Now then, by the authority which God
Hath unto me committed, I absolve thee
From all thy sins—be as thy faith thy welfare!
[*He gives her the host.*
Receive the body which for thee was offer'd—
[*He takes the cup which stands upon the table, consecrates it with silent prayer, then presents it to her; she hesitates to take it, and makes signs to him to withdraw it.*
Receive the blood, which for thy sins was shed—
Receive it—'tis allow'd thee by the Pope,
To exercise in death the highest office
Of kings, the holy office of the priesthood.
[*She takes the cup.*
And as thou now in this his earthly body
Hast held with God mysterious communion,
So may'st thou henceforth, in his realm of joy,
Where sin no more exists, nor tears of woe,
A fair transfigur'd spirit, join thyself
For ever with the Godhead, and for ever.
[*He sets down the cup; hearing a noise, he covers his head, and goes to the door; Mary remains in silent devotion, on her knees.*

MELVIL (*returning*). A painful conflict is in store for thee;
Feel'st thou within thee strength enough to smother
Each impulse of malignity and hate?

MARY. I fear not a relapse. I have to God
Devoted both my hatred, and my love.

MEL. Well, then, prepare thee to receive my Lords
Of Leicester and of Burleigh. They are here.

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* PAULET.

[LEICESTER *remains in the back-ground, without raising his eyes;* BURLEIGH, *who remarks his confusion, steps between him and the* QUEEN.

BUR. I come, my Lady Stuart, to receive
Your last commands and wishes.

MARY. Thanks, my Lord.

BUR. . It is the pleasure of my royal mistress,
That nothing reasonable be denied you.
MARY. . My will, my Lord, declares my last desires;
I've plac'd it in the hand of Sir Amias,
And humbly beg, that it may be fulfill'd.
PAUL. . You may rely on this.
MARY. I beg that all
My servants unmolested may return
To France, or Scotland, as their wishes lead.
BUR. . It shall be as you wish.
MARY. And since my body
Is not to rest in consecrated ground,
I pray you suffer this my faithful servant
To bear my heart to France, to my relations—
Alas! 'twas ever there.
BURLEIGH. It shall be done.
What wishes else?
MARY. Unto her Majesty
Of England bear a sister's salutation;
Tell her, that from the bottom of my heart
I pardon her my death: most humbly too
I crave her to forgive me for the passion
With which I spoke to her. May God preserve her,
And bless her with a long and prosp'rous reign!
BUR. . Say, do you still adhere to your resolve,
And still refuse assistance from the Dean?
MARY. . My Lord, I've made my peace with God.
[*To* PAULET. Good Sir,
I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow,—
Bereft you of your age's only stay.
Oh, let me hope you do not hate my name.
PAULET (*giving her his hand*).
The Lord be with you! go your way in peace.

SCENE IX.

HANNAH KENNEDY, *and the other women of the* QUEEN *crowd into the room, with marks of horror. The* SHERIFF *follows them, a white staff in his hand; behind are seen, through the open doors, men under arms.*

MARY. . What ails thee, Hannah?—Yes—my hour is come—
The Sheriff comes to lead me to my fate,
And part we must—farewell!—

KENNEDY *and* CURL. We will not leave thee,
We will not part from thee.
MARY (*to* MELVIL). You, worthy Sir,
And my dear faithful Hannah, shall attend me,
In my last moments. I am sure, my Lord
Will not refuse my heart this consolation.
BUR. For this I have no warrant.
MARY. How, my Lord;
Can you deny me then this small petition?
Respect my sex; who shall attend me else,
And yield me the last service?—sure it never
Can be my sister's pleasure, that in me
My sex should be insulted; that these men
With their rude hands, should touch my royal person.
BUR. Tis order'd that no woman shall ascend
The scaffold steps with you—their tears and moans—
MARY. She shall not weep, my Lord, she shall not moan;
I answer for my Hannah's resolution,
Be merciful; divide me not so soon
From my true foster-mother, from my friend.
She bore me on her arms into this life,
Let her then gently lead me to my death.
PAULET (*to* BURLEIGH).
Yield to her wishes.
BURLEIGH. Be it so.
MARY. I now
Have nothing in this world to wish for more.
[*She takes the crucifix, and kisses it.*
My God! My Comforter! My blest Redeemer!
As once thy arms were stretch'd upon the cross,
Let them be now extended to receive me!
[*She turns round to go, at the same moment her eyes fall upon* LEICESTER, *who, on her going, starts involuntarily and turns his eyes towards her: at this sight* MARY *trembles, her knees fail her, she is about to fall, when* LEICESTER *catches at her, and receives her in his arms; she regards him for some time earnestly, and in silence; he cannot support her looks; at length she speaks.*
You keep your word, my Lord of Leicester: for
You promised me your arm to lead me forth
From prison, and you lend it to me now.

At length the wish'd for day is come, and what
Was oft the object of my fondest dreams
Is now accomplish'd: and the Earl of Leicester,
The long expected, the long wish'd for friend,
Appears at length in Fotheringay Castle.
I see him standing in my prison; all
Is ready for the journey; all the gates
Stand open, and at length I cross the threshold,
Conducted by his hand; and now I leave
These dismal walls behind me, and for ever.
All is fulfill'd, and you have sav'd your honour

[*He stands as if annihilated; she continues, with a gentle voice.*

Yes, Leicester; not for liberty alone
I wish'd to be indebted to your hands.
You should have made me bless that liberty.
Led by your hand, and happy in your love,
I hop'd once more to taste the joys of life.
Yes; now that I'm prepar'd from all the world
To part, and to become a happy spirit,
Whom earthly inclinations tempt no more,
Now, Leicester, I may venture to confess
Without a blush, the frailty I have conquer'd—
Farewell, my lord; and, if you can, be happy!
To woo two Queens has been your daring aim;
You have disdain'd a tender, loving heart;
Betray'd it, in the hope to win a proud one:
Kneel at the feet of Queen Elizabeth!
May your reward not prove your punishment.
Farewell; I now have nothing more on earth.

[*She goes, preceded by the Sheriff, at her side* MELVIL *and her Nurse,* BURLEIGH *and* PAULET *follow, the others wailing, follow her with their eyes till she disappears; they then retire through the other two doors.*

SCENE X.

LEICESTER (*remaining alone*).

Do I live still? Can I still bear to live?
Will not this roof fall down and bury me?
Yawns no abyss, to swallow in its gulph
The veriest wretch on earth? What have I lost?

Oh, what a pearl have I not cast away!
What bliss celestial madly dash'd aside!
She's gone, a spirit purged from earthly stain,
And the despair of hell remains for me!
Where is the purpose now with which I came,
To stifle my heart's voice in callous scorn?
To see her head descend upon the block
With unaverted and indifferent eyes?
How doth her presence wake my slumb'ring shame?
Must she in death surround me with Love's toils?
Lost, wretched man! No more it suits thee now
To melt away, in womanly compassion:
Love's golden bliss lies not upon thy path.
Then arm thy breast in panoply of steel,
And henceforth be thy brows of adamant!
Wouldst thou not lose the guerdon of thy guilt,
Thou must uphold, complete it daringly!
Pity be dumb: mine eyes be petrified!
I'll see—I will be witness of her fall.

[*He advances with resolute steps towards the door, through which* MARY *passed; but stops suddenly half way.*

No! No! The terrors of all Hell possess me.
I cannot look upon the dreadful deed;
I cannot see her die!—Hark! What was that?
They are already there. Beneath my feet
The bloody business is preparing. Hark!
I hear their voices—Hence!—Away—Away—
From this abode of misery and death!

[*He attempts to escape by another door; finds it locked, and returns.*

How! Does some demon chain me to this spot?
To hear, what I would shudder to behold?
That voice—it is the Dean's, exhorting her;
She interrupts him. Hark—she prays aloud—
Her voice is firm—now all is still, quite still!
And sobs and women's moans are all I hear.
Now, they undress her—they remove the stool—
She kneels upon the cushion—lays her head—

[*Having spoken these last words, and paused awhile, he is seen with a convulsive motion suddenly to shrink, and faint away; a confused hum of*

voices is heard at the same moment from below, and continues for some time.

SCENE XI.

The second Chamber in the Fourth Act.

ELIZABETH (*entering from a side door; her gait and action expressive of the most violent uneasiness*).

No message yet arrived! What! no one here!
Will evening never come! Stands the sun still
In its ethereal course? I can no more
Remain upon the rack of expectation!
Is it accomplish'd?—Is it not?—I shudder
At both events, and do not dare to ask.
My Lord of Leicester comes not,—Burleigh too,
Whom I appointed to fulfil the sentence.
If they have quitted London, then 'tis done,
The bolt has left its rest—it cuts the air—
It strikes;—has struck already:—were my realm
At stake, I could not now arrest its course.
Who's there?

SCENE XII.

Enter a PAGE.

ELIZABETH. Return'd alone? Where are the Lords?
PAGE. My Lord High Treasurer, and the Earl of Leicester—
ELIZ. Where are they?
PAGE. They are not in London.
ELIZ. No!
Where are they then?
PAGE. That no one could inform me;
Before the dawn, mysteriously, in haste,
They quitted London.
ELIZABETH (*exultingly*). I am Queen of England!
[*Walking up and down in the greatest agitation.*
Go—call me—no, remain, boy! She is dead—
Now have I room upon the earth at last.
Why do I shake? Whence comes this agueish dread?
My fears are cover'd by the grave; who dares
To say I did it?—I have tears enough
In store to weep her fall.—Are you still here?
[*To the* PAGE.
Command my secretary Davison

To come to me this instant. Let the Earl
Of Shrewsbury be summon'd. Here he comes.
[*Exit Page.*

SCENE XIII.

Enter SHREWSBURY.

ELIZ. Welcome, my noble Lord. What tidings—say?
It cannot be a trifle which hath led
Your footsteps hither at so late an hour.

SHREW. My Liege, the doubts that hung upon my heart,
And dutiful concern for your fair fame,
Directed me this morning to the Tower,
Where Mary's secretaries, Nau and Curl,
Are now confined as pris'ners, for I wish'd
Once more to put their evidence to proof.
On my arrival the lieutenant seem'd
Embarras'd and perplex'd; refus'd to show me
His pris'ners; but my threats obtain'd admittance.
God! what a sight was there! With frantic looks,
With hair dishevell'd, on his pallet lay
The Scot, like one tormented by a fury.
The miserable man no sooner saw me,
Then at my feet he fell, and there, with screams,
Clasping my knees, and writhing like a worm,
Implored, conjured me to acquaint him with
His sov'reign's destiny, for vague reports
Had somehow reach'd the dungeons of the tow'r,
That she had been condemn'd to suffer death.
When I confirm'd these tidings, adding too,
That on his evidence she had been doom'd,—
He started wildly up,—caught by the throat
His fellow pris'ner; with the giant strength
Of madness tore him to the ground, and tried
To strangle him. No sooner had we sav'd
The wretch from his fierce grapple, than at once
He turn'd his rage against himself, and beat
His breast with savage fists; then curs'd himself
And his companions to the depths of hell!
His evidence was false; the fatal letters
To Babington, which he had sworn were true,
He now denounc'd as forgeries—for he
Had set down words the Queen had never spoken.
The traitor Nau had led him to this treason.

Then ran he to the casement, threw it wide
With frantic force, and cried into the street
So loud, that all the people gather'd round.
I am the man, Queen Mary's secretary,
The traitor, who accus'd his mistress falsely;
I bore false witness, and am cursed for ever!

ELIZ. . You said yourself, that he had lost his wits;
A madman's words prove nothing.

SHREWSBURY. Yet this madness
Serves in itself to swell the proof. My Liege,
Let me conjure thee; be not over hasty;
Pri'thee, give order for a new inquiry!

ELIZ. . I will, my Lord, because it is your wish,
Not that I can believe my noble peers
Have in this case pronounced a hasty judgment.
To set your mind at rest, the inquiry shall
Be straight renew'd. Well, that 'tis not too late!—
Upon the honour of our royal name
No, not the shadow of a doubt shall rest.

SCENE XIV.

Enter DAVISON.

ELIZ. . The sentence, Sir, which I but late entrusted
Unto your keeping;—where is it?

DAVISON (*in the utmost astonishment*). The sentence!

ELIZABETH (*more urgent*).
Which yesterday I gave into your charge.

DAV. . Into my charge, my Liege!

ELIZABETH. The people urged
And baited me to sign it. I perforce
Was driven to yield obedience to their will.
I did so; did so, on extreme constraint,
And in your hands deposited the paper.
To gain time was my purpose; you remember,
What then I told you. Now, the paper, Sir!

SHREW. Restore it, Sir, affairs have changed since then,
The inquiry must be set on foot anew.

DAV. . Anew! Eternal mercy!

ELIZABETH. Why this pause,
This hesitation? Where, Sir, is the paper?

DAV. . I am undone! Undone! My fate is sealed!

ELIZABETH (*interrupting him violently*).
Let me not fancy, Sir—

DAVISON. O, I am lost!
I have it not.
ELIZABETH. How? What?
SHREWSBURY. O, God in heav'n!
DAV. . It is in Burleigh's hands—since yesterday.
ELIZ. . Wretch! Is it thus you have obeyed my orders?
Did I not lay my strict injunction on you
To keep it carefully?
DAVISON. No such injunction
Was laid on me, my Liege.
ELIZABETH. Give me the lie?
Opprobrious wretch! When did I order you
To give the paper into Burleigh's hands?
DAV. . Never expressly in so many words.—
ELIZ. . And, paltering villain! dare you then presume
To construe, as you list, my words—and lay
Your bloody meaning on them? Wo betide you,
If evil come of this officious deed!
Your life shall answer the event to me.
Earl Shrewsbury, you see how my good name
Has been abused!
SHREWSBURY. I see! O, God in heav'n!
ELIZ. . What say you?
SHREWSBURY. If the Knight has dar'd to act
In this, upon his own authority,
Without the knowledge of your majesty,
He must be cited to the Court of Peers
To answer there for subjecting thy name
To the abhorrence of all after time.

SCENE XV.

Enter BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH (*bowing his knee before the Queen*).
Long life and glory to my royal mistress,
And may all enemies of her dominions
End like this Stuart.
[SHREWSBURY *hides his face.*—DAVISON *wrings his hands in despair.*
ELIZABETH. Speak, my Lord; did you
From me receive the warrant?
BURLEIGH. No, my Queen;
From Davison.

ELIZABETH. And did he in my name
Deliver it?
BURLEIGH. No, that I cannot say.
ELIZ. . And dar'd you then to execute the writ
Thus hastily, nor wait to know my pleasure?
Just was the sentence—we are free from blame
Before the world; yet it behoved thee not
To intercept our natural clemency.
For this, my Lord, I banish you my presence;
And as this forward will was *yours* alone
Bear *you* alone the curse of the misdeed! [*To* DAV.
For, you, Sir; who have trait'rously o'erstepp'd
The bounds of your commission, and betray'd
A sacred pledge entrusted to your care,
A more severe tribunal is prepar'd:
Let him be straight conducted to the Tow'r,
And capital arraignments fil'd against him.
My honest Talbot, you alone have prov'd,
'Mongst all my counsellors, an upright man:
You shall henceforward be my guide—my friend.
SHREW. O! banish not the truest of your friends;
Nor cast those into prison, who for you
Have acted; who for you are silent now.
But suffer me, great Queen, to give the seal,
Which, these twelve years, I've borne unworthily,
Back to your royal hands, and take my leave.
ELIZABETH (*surprised*).
No, Shrewsbury; you surely would not now
Desert me? No; not now.
SHREWSBURY. Pardon, I am
Too old, and this right hand is grown too stiff
To set the seal upon your later deeds.
ELIZ. . Will he forsake me, who has sav'd my life?
SHREW. 'Tis little I have done;—I could not save
Your nobler part. Live—govern happily!
Your rival's dead. Henceforth you've nothing more
To fear,—henceforth, to nothing pay regard. [*Exit.*
ELIZABETH (*to the* EARL *of* KENT, *who enters*).
Send for the Earl of Leicester.
KENT. He desires
To be excused—he is embark'd for France.
[*The Curtain drops.*

THE MAID OF ORLEANS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHARLES THE SEVENTH, *King of France.*
QUEEN ISABEL, *his Mother.*
AGNES SOREL.
PHILIP THE GOOD, *Duke of Burgundy.*
EARL DUNOIS, *Bastard of Orleans.*
LA HIRE, DUCHÂTEL, *French Officers.*
ARCHBISHOP OF RHEIMS.
CHATILLON, *a Burgundian Knight.*
RAOUL, *a Lotharingian Knight.*
TALBOT, *the English General.*
LIONEL, FASTOLFE, *English Officers.*
MONTGOMERY, *a Welshman.*
COUNCILLORS OF ORLEANS.
AN ENGLISH HERALD.
THIBAUT D'ARC, *a wealthy Countryman.*
MARGOT, LOUISON, JOHANNA, *his daughters.*
ETIENNE, CLAUDE MARIE, RAIMOND, *their Suitors.*
BERTRAND, *another Countryman.*
Apparition of a black Knight.
CHARCOAL-BURNER AND HIS WIFE.
Soldiers and People. Officers of the Crown. Bishops, Monks, Marshals, Magistrates, Courtiers, and other mute persons in the Coronation Procession.

PROLOGUE.

A rural District. To the right, a Chapel with an Image of the Virgin; to the left, an ancient Oak.

SCENE I.

THIBAUT D'ARC. *His three Daughters. Three young Shepherds, their Suitors.*

THIB. . Ay, my good neighbours! we at least to-day
Are Frenchmen still, free citizens and lords
Of the old soil, which our forefathers till'd.
Who knows whom we to-morrow must obey?
For England her triumphal banner waves
From every wall; the blooming fields of France
Are trampled down beneath her chargers' hoofs;
Paris hath yielded to her conquering arms,

And with the ancient crown of Dagobert
Adorns the scion of a foreign race.
Our king's descendant, disinherited,
Must steal in secret through his own domain;
While his first peer and nearest relative
Contends against him in the hostile ranks;
Ay, his unnatural mother leads them on.
Around us towns and peaceful hamlets burn.
Near and more near the devastating fire
Rolls toward these vales, which yet repose in peace.
—Therefore, good neighbours, I have now resolved,
While God still grants us safety, to provide
For my three daughters; for 'midst war's alarms
Women require protection, and true love
Hath power to render lighter every load.
[*To the first Shepherd.*
Come, Etienne! You seek my Margot's hand.
Fields lying side by side and loving hearts
Promise a happy union! [*To the second.*
Claude! You're silent,
And my Louison looks upon the ground?
How, shall I separate two loving hearts
Because you have no wealth to offer me?
Who now has wealth? Our barns and homes afford
Spoil to the foe, and fuel to their fires.
In times like these, a husband's faithful breast
Affords the only shelter from the storm.

LOUIS. My father!

CLAUDE MARIE. My Louison!

LOUISON (*embracing* JOHANNA). My dear sister!

THIB. . I give to each a yard, a stall and herd,
And also thirty acres; and as God
Gave me his blessing, so I give you mine!

MARGOT (*embracing* JOHANNA).
Gladden our father—follow our example!
Let this day see three unions ratified!

THIB. . Now go; make all things ready; for the morn
Shall see the wedding. Let our village friends
Be all assembled for the festival.
[*The two couple retire arm-in-arm*

Scene II.

Thibaut, Raimond, Johanna.

Thib. . Thy sisters, Joan, will soon be happy brides;
I see them gladly, they rejoice my age;
But thou, my youngest, giv'st me grief and pain.
Raim. . What is the matter? Why upbraid thy child?
Thib. . Here is this noble youth, the flower and pride
Of all our village; he hath fix'd on thee
His fond affections, and for three long years
Has woo'd thee with respectful tenderness;
But thou dost thrust him back, with cold reserve,
Nor is there one 'mong all our shepherd youths
Who e'er can win a gracious smile from thee.
—I see thee blooming in thy youthful prime;
Thy spring it is, the joyous time of hope;
Thy person, like a tender flower, hath now
Disclos'd its beauty, but I vainly wait
For love's sweet blossom genially to blow,
And ripen joyously to golden fruit!
Oh that must ever grieve me, and betrays
Some sad deficiency in nature's work!
The heart I like not, which, severe and cold,
Expands not in the genial years of youth.
Raim. . Forbear, good father! Cease to urge her thus!
A noble tender fruit of heavenly growth
Is my Johanna's love, and time alone
Bringeth the costly to maturity!
Still she delights to range among the hills,
And fears descending from the wild free heath,
To tarry 'neath the lowly roofs of men,
Where dwell the narrow cares of humble life.
From the deep vale, with silent wonder, oft
I mark her, when, upon a lofty hill
Surrounded by her flock, erect she stands,
With noble port, and bends her earnest gaze
Down on the small domains of earth. To me
She looketh then, as if from other times
She came, foreboding things of import high.

THIB. 'Tis that precisely which displeases me!
She shuns her sisters' gay companionship;
Seeks out the desert mountains, leaves her couch
Before the crowing of the morning cock,
And in the dreaded hour, when men are wont
Confidingly to seek their fellow-men,
She, like the solitary bird, creeps forth,
And in the fearful spirit-realm of night,
To yon crossway repairs, and there alone
Holds secret commune with the mountain wind.
Wherefore this place precisely doth she choose?
Why hither always doth she drive her flock?
For hours together I have seen her sit
In dreamy musing 'neath the Druid tree,
Which every happy creature shuns with awe.
For 'tis not holy there; an evil spirit
Hath since the fearful pagan days of old
Beneath its branches fix'd his dread abode.
The oldest of our villagers relate
Strange tales of horror of the Druid tree;
Mysterious voices of unearthly sound
From its unhallow'd shade oft meet the ear.
Myself, when in the gloomy twilight hour
My path once chanc'd to lead me near this tree,
Beheld a spectral figure sitting there,
Which slowly from its long and ample robe
Stretch'd forth its wither'd hand, and beckon'd me;
But on I went with speed, nor look'd behind,
And to the care of God consign'd my soul.

RAIMOND (*pointing to the image of the Virgin*).
Yon holy image of the Virgin blest,
Whose presence heavenly peace diffuseth round,
Not Satan's work, leadeth thy daughter here.

THIB. No! not in vain hath it in fearful dreams
And apparitions strange reveal'd itself.
For three successive nights I have beheld
Johanna sitting on the throne at Rheims,
A sparkling diadem of seven stars
Upon her brow, the sceptre in her hand,
From which three lilies sprung, and I, her sire,

With her two sisters, and the noble peers,
The earls, archbishops, and the King himself,
Bow'd down before her. In my humble home,
How could this splendour enter my poor brain?
Oh, 'tis the prelude to some fearful fall!
This warning dream, in pictur'd show, reveals
The vain and sinful longing of her heart.
She looks with shame upon her lowly birth.
Because with richer beauty God hath grac'd
Her form, and dower'd her with wondrous gifts
Above the other maidens of this vale,
She in her heart indulges sinful pride,
And pride it is, through which the angels fell,
By which the fiend of Hell seduces man.

RAIM. Who cherishes a purer, humbler mind
Than doth thy pious daughter? Does she not
With cheerful spirit work her sisters' will?
She is more highly gifted far than they,
Yet, like a servant maiden, it is she
Who silently performs the humblest tasks.
Beneath her guiding hands prosperity
Atttendeth still thy harvests and thy flocks;
And around all she does there ceaseless flows
A blessing, rare and unaccountable.

THIB. Ay truly! Unaccountable indeed!
Sad horror at this blessing seizes me!
—But now no more; henceforth I will be silent.
Shall I accuse my own beloved child?
I can do nought but warn and pray for her.
Yet warn I must.—O shun the Druid tree!
Stay not alone, and in the midnight hour
Break not the ground for roots, no drinks prepare,
No characters inscribe upon the sand!
'Tis easy to unlock the realm of spirits;
Listening each sound, beneath a film of earth
They lie in wait, ready to rush aloft.
Stay not alone, for in the wilderness
The prince of darkness tempted e'en our Lord.

Scene III.

Thibaut, Raimond, Johanna.

Bertrand *enters, a helmet in his hand.*

Raim. . Hush! here is Bertrand coming back from town,
What bears he in his hand?

Bertrand. You look at me
With wondering gaze; no doubt you are surprised
To see this martial helm!

Thibaut. We are indeed!
Come, tell us how you came by it? Why bring
This fearful omen to our peaceful vale?

[Johanna, *who has remained indifferent during the two previous scenes, becomes attentive, and steps nearer.*

Bert. . I scarce can tell you how I came by it.
I had procur'd some tools at Vaucouleurs;
A crowd was gather'd in the market-place,
For fugitives were just arriv'd in haste
From Orleans, bringing most disastrous news.
In tumult all the town together flock'd,
And as I forc'd a passage through the crowds,
A brown Bohemian woman, with this helm,
Approach'd me, eyed me narrowly, and said:
"Fellow, you seek a helm; I know it well.
Take this one! For a trifle it is yours."
"Go with it to the soldiers," I replied,
"I am a husbandman, and want no helm."
She would not cease, however, and went on:
"None knoweth if he may not want a helm.
A roof of metal for the head just now
Is of more value than a house of stone."
Thus she pursued me closely through the streets,
Still offering the helm, which I refused.
I mark'd it well, and saw that it was bright,
And fair and worthy of a knightly head;
And when in doubt I weigh'd it in my hand,
The strangeness of the incident revolving,
The woman disappear'd, for suddenly
The rushing crowd had carried her away,

And I was left, the helmet in my hand.

JOHANNA (*attempting eagerly to seize it*).
Give me the helmet!

BERTRAND. Why, what boots it you?
It is not suited to a maiden's head.

JOHANNA (*seizing it from him*).
Mine is the helmet—it belongs to me!

THIB. . What whim is this?

RAIMOND. Nay, let her have her way!
This warlike ornament becomes her well,
For in her bosom beats a manly heart.
Remember how she once subdued the wolf,
The savage monster which destroyed our herds,
And fill'd the neighb'ring shepherds with dismay.
She all alone—the lion-hearted maid—
Fought with the wolf, and from him snatch'd the lamb,
Which he was bearing in his bloody jaws.
How brave soe'er the head this helm adorn'd,
It cannot grace a worthier one than hers!

THIBAUT (*to* BERTRAND).
Relate what new disasters have occurred.
What tidings brought the fugitives?

BERTRAND. May God
Have pity on our land, and save the King!
In two great battles we have lost the day;
Our foes are station'd in the heart of France,
Far as the river Loire our lands are theirs—
Now their whole force they have combined, and lay
Close siege to Orleans.

THIBAUT. God protect the King!

BERT. . Artillery is brought from every side,
And as the dusky squadrons of the bees
Swarm round the hive upon a summer day,
As clouds of locusts from the sultry air
Descend and shroud the country round for miles,
So doth the cloud of war, o'er Orleans' fields,
Pour forth its many-nationed multitudes,
Whose varied speech, in wild confusion blent,
With strange and hollow murmurs fills the air.
For Burgundy, the mighty potentate,

Conducts his motley host; the Hennegarians,
The men of Liege and of Luxemburg,
The people of Namur, and those who dwell
In fair Brabant; the wealthy men of Ghent,
Who boast their velvets, and their costly silks;
The Zealanders, whose cleanly towns appear
Emerging from the ocean; Hollanders
Who milk the lowing herds; men from Utrecht,
And even from West Friesland's distant realm,
Who look towards the ice-pole—all combine,
Beneath the banner of the powerful duke,
Together to accomplish Orleans' fall.

THIB. . Oh the unblest, the lamentable strife,
Which turns the arms of France against itself!

BERT. . E'en she, the Mother-Queen, proud Isabel—
Bavaria's haughty princess—may be seen,
Array'd in armour, riding through the camp;
With poisonous words of irony she fires
The hostile troops to fury 'gainst her son,
Whom she hath clasp'd to her maternal breast

THIB. . A curse upon her, and may God prepare
For her a death like haughty Jezebel's!

BERT. . The fearful Sal'sbury conducts the siege,
The town-destroyer; with him Lionel,
The brother of the lion; Talbot, too,
Who, with his murd'rous weapon, moweth down
The people in the battle: they have sworn,
With ruthless insolence, to doom to shame
The hapless maidens, and to sacrifice
All who the sword have wielded, with the sword.
Four lofty watch-towers, to o'ertop the town,
They have uprear'd; Earl Sal'sbury from on high
Casteth abroad his cruel, murd'rous glance,
And marks the rapid wanderers in the streets.
Thousands of cannon balls, of pond'rous weight,
Are hurl'd into the city. Churches lie
In ruin'd heaps, and Nôtre Dame's royal tower
Begins at length to bow its lofty head.
They also have form'd powder-vaults below,
And thus, above a subterranean hell,
The timid city every hour expects,

'Midst crashing thunder, to break forth in flames.

[JOHANNA *listens with close attention, and places the helmet on her head.*

THIB. . But where were then our heroes? Where the swords
Of Saintrailles, and La Hire, and brave Dunois,
Of France the bulwark, that the haughty foe
With such impetuous force thus onward rushed?
Where is the King? Can he supinely see
His kingdom's peril, and his cities' fall?

BERT. . The King at Chinon holds his court; he lacks
Soldiers to keep the field. Of what avail
The leader's courage, and the hero's arm,
When pallid fear doth paralyze the host?
A sudden panic, as if sent from God,
Unnerves the courage of the bravest men.
In vain the summons of the King resounds
As when the howling of the wolf is heard,
The sheep in terror gather side by side,
So Frenchmen, careless of their ancient fame,
Seek only now the shelter of the towns.
One knight alone, I have been told, has brought
A feeble company, and joins the King
With sixteen banners.

JOHANNA (*quickly*). What's the hero's name?

BERT. . 'Tis Baudricour. But much I fear the knight
Will not be able to elude the foe,
Who track him closely with two numerous hosts.

JOHAN. . Where halts the knight? Pray tell me, if you know

BERT. . About a one day's march from Vaucouleurs.

THIBAUT (*to* JOHANNA).
Why, what is that to thee? Thou dost inquire
Concerning matters which become thee not.

BERT. . The foe being now so strong, and from the King
No safety to be hoped, at Vaucouleurs
They have with unanimity resolved
To yield them to the Duke of Burgundy.
Thus we avoid a foreign yoke, and still
Continue by our ancient royal line;
Ay, to the ancient crown we may fall back
Should France and Burgundy be reconcil'd.

JOHANNA (*as if inspired*).
Speak not of treaty! Speak not of surrender!
The Saviour comes, he arms him for the fight.
The fortunes of the foe before the walls
Of Orleans shall be wreck'd! His hour is come,
He now is ready for the reaper's hand,
And with her sickle will the maid appear,
And mow to earth the harvest of his pride.
She from the heavens will tear his glory down,
Which he had hung aloft, among the stars;
Despair not! Fly not! for ere yonder corn
Assumes its golden hue, or ere the moon
Displays her perfect orb, no English horse
Shall drink the rolling waters of the Loire.
BERT. . Alas! no miracle will happen now!
JOHAN. Yes, there shall yet be one—a snow-white dove
Shall fly, and with the eagle's boldness, tear
The birds of prey, which rend her Fatherland.
She shall o'erthrow this haughty Burgundy,
Betrayer of the kingdom; Talbot, too,
The hundred-handed, heaven-defying scourge;
This Sal'sbury, who violates our fanes,
And all these island robbers shall she drive
Before her like a flock of timid lambs.
The Lord will be with her, the God of battle;
A weak and trembling creature he will choose,
And through a tender maid proclaim his power,
For he is the Almighty!
THIBAUT. What strange power
Hath seized the maiden?
RAIMOND. Doubtless 'tis the helm
Which doth inspire her with such martial thoughts
Look at your daughter. Mark her flashing eye,
Her glowing cheek, which kindles as with fire!
JOHAN. This realm shall fall! This ancient land of fame,
The fairest that, in his majestic course,
Th' eternal sun surveys—this paradise,
Which, as the apple of his eye, God loves—
Endure the fetters of a foreign yoke?
—Here were the heathen scatter'd, and the cross

And holy image first were planted here;
Here rest Saint Louis' ashes, and from hence
The troops went forth, who set Jerusalem free.

BERTRAND (*in astonishment*).

Hark how she speaks! Why, whence can she obtain
This glorious revelation?—Father Arc!
A wond'rous daughter God hath given you!

JOHAN. We shall no longer serve a native prince!
The King, who never dies, shall pass away—
The guardian of the sacred plough, who fills
The earth with plenty, who protects our herds,
Who frees the bondmen from captivity,
Who gathers all his cities round his throne—
Who aids the helpless, and appals the base,
Who envies no one, for he reigns supreme;
Who is a mortal, yet an angel too,
Dispensing mercy on the hostile earth.
For the King's throne, which glitters o'er with gold,
Affords a shelter for the destitute;—
Power and compassion meet together there,
The guilty tremble, but the just draw near,
And with the guardian lion fearless sport!
The stranger king, who cometh from afar,
Whose fathers' sacred ashes do not lie
Interr'd among us; can he love our land?
Who was not young among our youth, whose heart
Respondeth not to our familiar words,
Can he be as a father to our sons?

THIB. God save the King and France! We're peaceful folk,
Who neither wield the sword, nor rein the steed.
—Let us await the King whom victory crowns;
The fate of battle is the voice of God.
He is our Lord who crowns himself at Rheims,
And on his head receives the holy oil.
—Come, now to work! come! and let every one
Think only of the duty of the hour!
Let the earth's great ones for the earth contend,
Untroubled we may view the desolation,
For stedfast stand the acres which we till.
The flames consume our villages, our corn
Is trampled 'neath the tread of warlike steeds;

With the new spring new harvests re-appear,
And our light huts are quickly rear'd again!
[*They all retire, except the Maiden.*

Scene IV.

JOHANNA (*alone*).

Farewell, ye mountains, ye beloved glades,
Ye lone and peaceful valleys, fare ye well!
Through you Johanna never more may stray!
For aye Johanna bids you now farewell.
Ye meads which I have water'd, and ye trees
Which I have planted, still in beauty bloom!
Farewell ye grottos, and ye crystal springs!
Sweet echo, vocal spirit of the vale,
Who sang'st responsive to my simple strain,
Johanna goes, and ne'er returns again.

Ye scenes where all my tranquil joys I knew,
For ever now I leave you far behind!
Poor foldless lambs, no shepherd now have you!
O'er the wide heath stray henceforth unconfin'd!
For I to danger's field, of crimson hue,
Am summon'd hence, another flock to find.
Such is to me the Spirit's high behest;
No earthly vain ambition fires my breast.

For who in glory did on Horeb's height
Descend to Moses in the bush of flame,
And bade him go and stand in Pharaoh's sight—
Who once to Israel's pious shepherd came,
And sent him forth, his champion in the fight,—
Who aye hath loved the lowly shepherd train,—
He, from these leafy boughs, thus spake to me,
"Go forth! Thou shalt on earth my witness be.

"Thou in rude armour must thy limbs invest,
A plate of steel upon thy bosom wear;
Vain earthly love may never stir thy breast,
Nor passion's sinful glow be kindled there.
Ne'er with the bride-wreath shall thy locks be dress'd,
Nor on thy bosom bloom an infant fair;

But war's triumphant glory shall be thine;
Thy martial fame all women's shall outshine.

"For when in fight the stoutest hearts despair,
When direful ruin threatens France, forlorn,
Then thou aloft my oriflamme shalt bear,
And swiftly as the reaper mows the corn,
Thou shalt lay low the haughty conqueror;
His fortune's wheel thou rapidly shalt turn,
To Gaul's heroic sons deliv'rance bring,
Relieve beleaguer'd Rheims, and crown thy king!"

The heavenly Spirit promised me a sign;
He sends the helmet, it hath come from him.
Its iron filleth me with strength divine,
I feel the courage of the cherubim;
As with the rushing of a mighty wind
It drives me forth to join the battle's din;
The clanging trumpets sound, the chargers rear,
And the loud war-cry thunders in mine ear.

[*She goes out.*

ACT I.

Scene I.

The royal Residence at Chinon.

Dunois *and* Du Chatel.

Dunois. No longer I'll endure it. I renounce
This recreant Monarch who forsakes himself.
My valiant heart doth bleed, and I could rain
Hot tear-drops from mine eyes, that robber-swords
Partition thus the royal realm of France;
That cities, ancient as the monarchy,
Deliver to the foe the rusty keys,
While here in idle and inglorious ease
We lose the precious season of redemption.
—Tidings of Orleans' peril reach mine ear,
Hither I sped from distant Normandy,
Thinking, arrayed in panoply of war,
To find the Monarch with his marshall'd hosts;

And find him—here! begirt with troubadours,
And juggling knaves, engaged in solving riddles,
And planning festivals in Sorel's honour,
As brooded o'er the land profoundest peace!
—The Constable hath gone, he will not brook
Longer the spectacle of shame.—I too
Depart, and leave him to his evil fate.

DUCH. . Here comes the King.

SCENE II.

KING CHARLES. *The same.*

CHAS. . The Constable hath sent us back his sword
And doth renounce our service. Now, by Heaven!
He thus hath rid us of a churlish man,
Who insolently sought to lord it o'er us.

DUNOIS. A man is precious in such perilous times;
I would not deal thus lightly with his loss.

CHAS. . Thou speakest thus from love of opposition;
While he was here, thou never wert his friend.

DUNOIS. He was a tiresome, proud, vexatious fool,
Who never could resolve.—For once, however,
He hath resolved. Betimes he goeth hence,
Where honour can no longer be achieved.

CHAS. . Thou'rt in a pleasant humour; undisturb'd
I'll leave thee to enjoy it.—Hark, Du Chatel!
Ambassadors are here from old king René,
Of tuneful song the master, far renowned.
—Let them as honour'd guests be entertain'd,
And unto each present a chain of gold.
[*To the bastard.*
Why smilest thou Dunois?

DUNOIS. That from thy mouth
Thou shakest golden chains.

DUCHATEL. Alas! my King!
No gold existeth in thy treasury.

CHAS. . Then gold must be procured.—It must not be
That bards unhonour'd from our court depart.
'Tis they who make our barren sceptre bloom,
'Tis they who wreath around our fruitless crown
Life's joyous branch, of never-fading green.

Reigning, they justly rank themselves as kings,
Of gentle wishes they erect their throne,
Their harmless realm existeth not in space;
Hence should the bard accompany the king,
Life's higher sphere the heritage of both!

DUCH.. My royal Liege! I sought to spare thine ear
So long as aid and counsel could be found;
Now dire necessity doth loose my tongue.
—Nought hast thou now in presents to bestow,
Thou hast not wherewithal to live to-morrow!
The spring-tide of thy fortune is run out,
And lowest ebb is in thy treasury!
The soldiers, disappointed of their pay,
With sullen murmurs, threaten to retire.
My counsel faileth, not with royal splendour
But meagerly, to furnish out thy household.

CHAS. . My royal customs pledge, and borrow gold
From the Lombardians.

DUCHATEL. Sire, thy revenues,
Thy royal customs, are for three years pledg'd.

DUNOIS. And pledge meanwhile and kingdom both are lost.

CHAS. . Still many rich and beauteous lands are ours.

DUNOIS. So long as God and Talbot's sword permit!
When Orleans falleth into English hands
Then with King René thou may'st tend thy sheep!

CHAS. . Still at this King thou lov'st to point thy jest;
Yet 'tis this lackland Monarch, who to-day
Hath with a princely crown invested me.

DUNOIS. Not, in the name of heaven, with that of Naples,
Which is for sale, I hear, since he kept sheep.

CHAS. . It is a sportive festival, a jest,
Wherein he giveth to his fancy play,
To found a world all innocent and pure
In this barbaric, rude reality.
Yet noble—ay, right royal is his aim!
He will again restore the golden age,
When gentle manners reigned, when faithful love
The heroic hearts of valiant knights inspired,
And noble women, whose accomplished taste
Diffuseth grace around, in judgment sat.
The old man dwelleth in those bygone times,

And in our workday world would realize
The dreams of ancient bards, who picture life
'Mid bowers celestial, thron'd on golden clouds.—
He hath established hence a court of love,
Where valiant knights may dwell, and homage yield
To noble women, who are there enthroned,
And where pure love and true may find a home.
Me he hath chosen as the prince of Love.

DUNOIS. I am not such a base degenerate churl,
As Love's dominion rudely to assail.
I am her son, from her derive my name,
And in her kingdom lies my heritage.
The prince of Orleans was my sire, and while
No woman's heart was proof against his love,
No hostile fortress could withstand his shock!
Wilt thou, indeed, with honour name thyself
The prince of Love—be bravest of the brave!
As I have read in those old chronicles,
Love aye went coupled with heroic deeds,
And valiant heroes, not inglorious shepherds,
So legends tell us, graced king Arthur's board
The man whose valour is not beauty's shield,
Is all unworthy of her golden prize.
Here the arena!—combat for the crown,
Thy royal heritage!—with knightly sword
Thy lady's honour and thy realm defend—
And hast thou with hot valour snatch'd the crown
From streams of hostile blood,—then is the time,
And it would well become thee as a prince,
Love's myrtle chaplet round thy brows to wreathe.

CHARLES (*to a* PAGE, *who enters*).
What is the matter?

PAGE. Senators from Orleans
Entreat an audience, Sire.

CHARLES. Conduct them hither!
[PAGE *retires.*
Doubtless they succour need; what can I do,
Myself all-succourless!

SCENE III.

The same. Three SENATORS.

CHAS. . Welcome, my trusty citizens of Orleans!
What tidings bring ye from my faithful town?
Doth she continue with her wonted zeal
Still bravely to withstand the leaguering foe?

SENAT. . Ah, Sire! the city's peril is extreme;
And giant ruin, waxing hour by hour,
Still onward strides. The bulwarks are destroyed—
The foe, at each assault, advantage gains;
Bare of defenders are the city walls,
For with rash valour forth our soldiers rush,
While few, alas! return to view their homes,
And famine's scourge impendeth o'er the town.
In this extremity, the noble Count
Of Rochepierre, commander of the town,
Hath made a compact with the enemy,
According to old custom, to yield up,
On the twelfth day, the city to the foe,
Unless, meanwhile, before the town appear
A host of magnitude to raise the siege.

[DUNOIS *manifests the strongest indignation.*

CHAS. . The interval is brief.

SENATOR We hither come,
Attended by a hostile retinue,
To implore thee, Sire, to pity thy poor town,
And to send succour ere the appointed day,
When, if still unrelieved, she must surrender.

DUNOIS. And could Saintrailles consent to give his voice
To such a shameful compact?

SENATOR. Never, Sir!
Long as the hero liv'd, none dared to breathe
A single word of treaty, or surrender.

DUNOIS. He then is dead?

SENATOR. The noble hero fell,
His Monarch's cause defending, on our walls.

CHAS. . What! Saintrailles dead! Oh, in that single man
A host is founder'd!

[*A Knight enters and speaks apart with* DUNOIS, *who starts with suprrise.*

DUNOIS. That too!
CHARLES. Well! What is it?
DUNOIS. Count Douglas sendeth here. The Scottish troops
Revolt, and threaten to retire at once,
Unless their full arrears are paid to-day.
CHAS. . Du Chatel!
DU CHATEL (*shrugs his shoulders*).
Sire! I know not what to counsel.
CHAS. . Pledge, promise all, even unto half my realm.—
CHAT. . 'Tis vain! They have been fed with hope too often!
CHAS. . They are the finest troops of all my host!
They must not now, not now abandon me!
SENATOR (*throwing himself at the* KING'S *feet*).
Oh, King, assist us! Think of our distress!
CHARLES (*in despair*).
How! Can I summon armies from the earth?
Or grow a cornfield on my open palm?
Rend me in pieces!—Pluck my bleeding heart
Forth from my breast, and coin it 'stead of gold!
I've blood for you, but neither coin, nor troops.
[*He sees* SOREL *approach, and hastens towards her with outstretched arms.*

SCENE IV.

The same. AGNES SOREL, *a casket in her hand.*

CHAS. . My Agnes! Oh, my love! my dearest life!
Thou comest here to snatch me from despair!
Refuge I take within thy loving arms:
Possessing thee, I feel that nought is lost.
SOREL. . My King, beloved!
[*Looking around with an anxious, inquiring gaze.*
Dunois! Say, is it true,
Du Chatel?
DU CHATEL. 'Tis alas!
SOREL. So great the need?
No treasure left? The soldiers will disband?
CHAT. . Alas! it is too true!
SOREL (*giving him the casket*). Here—here is gold,
Here too are jewels! Melt my silver down!
Sell, pledge my castles—on my fair domains

In Provence, treasure raise—turn all to gold,
Appease the troops! No time is to be lost!
[She urges him to depart.

CHAS. . Well now, Dunois! Du Chatel! Do ye still
Account me poor, when I possess the crown
Of womankind?—She's nobly born as I;
The royal blood of Valois not more pure;
The most exalted throne she would adorn—
Yet she rejects it with disdain, and claims
No other title than to be my love.
No gift more costly will she e'er receive
Than early flower in winter, or rare fruit!
No sacrifice, on my part, she permits,
Yet sacrificeth all she hath to me!
With generous spirit she doth venture all
Her wealth and fortune in my sinking bark.

DUNOIS. Ay, she is mad indeed, my King, as thou;
She throws her all into a burning house,
And draweth water in the leaky vessel
Of the Danaïdes. Thee she will not save,
And in thy ruin but involve herself.—

SOREL. . Believe him not! Full many a time he hath
Perill'd his life for thee, and now forsooth,
Chafeth, because I risk my worthless gold!
How? Have I freely sacrificed to thee
What is esteemed far more than gold and pearls,
And shall I now hold back the gifts of fortune?
Oh, come! Let my example challenge thee
To noble self-denial! Let 's at once
Cast off the needless ornaments of life!
Thy courtiers metamorphose into soldiers;
Thy gold transmute to iron; all thou hast,
With resolute daring, venture for thy crown!
Peril and want we will participate!
Let us bestride the war-horse, and expose
Our tender person to the fiery glow
Of the hot sun, take for our canopy
The clouds above, and make the stones our pillow.
The rudest warrior, when he sees his King
Bear hardship and privation like the meanest,
Will patiently endure his own hard lot!

CHARLES (*laughing*).

Ay! now is realized an ancient word
Of prophecy, once uttered by a nun
Of Clairmont, in prophetic mood, who said,
That through a woman's aid I o'er my foes
Should triumph, and achieve my father's crown.
Far off I sought her in the English camp;
I strove to reconcile a mother's heart;
Here stands the heroine—my guide to Rheims!
My Agnes! I shall triumph through thy love!

SOREL. Thou'lt triumph through the valiant swords of friends.

CHAS. . And from my foes' dissensions much I hope—
For sure intelligence hath reach'd mine ear,
That 'twixt these English lords and Burgundy
Things do not stand precisely as they did:—
Hence to the duke I have despatch'd La Hire,
To try if he can lead my angry vassal
Back to his ancient loyalty and faith:—
Each moment now I look for his return.

DU CHATEL (*at the window*).

A knight e'en now dismounteth in the court.

CHAS. . A welcome messenger! We soon shall learn
Whether we're doomed to conquer or to yield.

SCENE V.

The same. LA HIRE.

CHARLES (*meeting him*).

Hope bringest thou, or not? Be brief, La Hire!
Out with thy tidings! What must we expect?

HIRE. . Expect nought, Sire, save from thine own good sword.

CHAS. . The haughty duke will not be reconciled!
Speak! How did he receive my embassy?

HIRE. . His first and unconditional demand,
Ere he consent to listen to thine errand,
Is that Du Chatel be deliver'd up,
Whom he doth name the murderer of his Sire.

CHAS. . This base condition we reject with scorn!

HIRE. . Then be the league dissolved ere it commence!

CHAS. . Hast thou thereon, as I commanded thee,

Challenged the duke to meet me in fair fight
On Montereau's bridge, whereon his father fell?

HIRE. . Before him on the ground I flung thy glove,
And said:—"Thou wouldst forget thy majesty,
And like a knight do battle for thy realm."
He scornfully rejoined—"He needed not
To fight for that which he possess'd already.
But if thou wert so eager for the fray,
Before the walls of Orleans thou wouldst find him,
Whither he purposed going on the morrow;"
Thereon he laughing turn'd his back upon me.

CHAS. . Say, did not justice raise her sacred voice,
Within the precincts of my Parliament?

HIRE. . The rage of party, Sire, hath silenc'd her.
An edict of the Parliament declares
Thee, and thy race, excluded from the throne

DUNOIS. These upstart burghers' haughty insolence!

CHAS. . Hast thou attempted with my mother aught?

HIRE. . With her?

CHARLES. Ay! How did she demean herself?

LA HIRE (*after a few moments' reflection*).
I chanced to step within St. Denis' walls
Precisely at the royal coronation.
The crowds were dress'd as for a festival;
Triumphal arches rose in every street
Through which the English monarch was to pass.
The way was strewed with flowers, and with huzzas,
As France some brilliant conquest had achieved,
The people thronged around the royal car.

SOREL. They could huzza—huzza, while trampling thus
Upon a gracious sovereign's loving heart!

HIRE. . I saw young Harry Lancaster—the boy—
On good St. Lewis' regal chair enthroned;
On either side his haughty uncles stood,
Bedford and Gloucester, and before him kneeled,
To render homage for his lands, Duke Philip.

CHAS. . O peer dishonour'd! O unworthy cousin!

HIRE. . The child was timid, and his footing lost
As up the steps he mounted towards the throne.
An evil omen! murmured forth the crowd,
And scornful laughter burst on every side.

Then forward stepped Queen Isabel—thy mother,
And—but it angers me to utter it!

CHARLES. Say on.

HIRE. . Within her arms she clasped the boy,
And herself placed him on thy father's throne.

CHAS. . Oh, mother! mother!

LA HIRE. E'en the murderous bands
Of the Burgundians, at this spectacle,
Evinced some tokens of indignant shame.
The Queen perceived it, and addressed the crowds,
Exclaiming with loud voice: "Be grateful, Frenchmen,
That I engraft upon a sickly stock
A healthy scion, and redeem you from
The misbegotten son of a mad Sire!"

[*The* KING *hides his face; Agnes hastens towards him and clasps him in her arms; all the bystanders express aversion and horror.*

DUNOIS. She-wolf of France! Rage-breathing Megara!

CHARLES (*after a pause to the senators*).
Yourselves have heard the posture of affairs.
Delay no longer, back return to Orleans,
And bear this message to my faithful town:
I do absolve my subjects from their oath,
Their own best interests let them now consult,
And yield them to the Duke of Burgundy;
'Yclept the Good, he needs must prove humane.

DUNOIS. What say'st thou, Sire? Thou wilt abandon Orleans!

SENATOR (*kneels down*).
My King! Abandon not thy faithful town!
Consign her not to England's harsh control.
She is a precious jewel in thy crown,
And none hath more inviolate faith maintain'd
Towards the kings, thy royal ancestors.

DUNOIS. Have we been routed? Is it lawful, Sire,
To leave the English masters of the field,
Without a single stroke to save the town?
And thinkest thou, with careless breath, forsooth,
Ere blood hath flowed, rashly to give away
The fairest city from the heart of France?

CHAS. . Blood hath been poured forth freely, and in vain!

The hand of Heaven is visibly against me;
In every battle is my host o'erthrown,
I am rejected of my parliament,
My capital, my people, hail my foe,
Those of my blood,—my nearest relatives,—
Forsake me and betray—and my own mother
Doth nurture at her breast the hostile brood.
—Beyond the Loire we will retire, and yield
To the o'ermastering hand of destiny
Which sideth with the English.

SOREL. God forbid
That we in weak despair should quit this realm!
This utterance came not from thy heart, my King,
Thy noble heart, which hath been sorely riven
By the fell deed of thy unnatural mother!
Thou'lt be thyself again, right valiantly
Thou'lt battle with thine adverse destiny,
Which doth oppose thee with relentless ire.

CHARLES (*lost in gloomy thought*).
Is it not true? A dark and ominous doom
Impendeth o'er the heaven-abandon'd house
Of Valois—there preside the avenging powers,
To whom a mother's crimes unbarr'd the way.
For thirty years my sire in madness rav'd;
Already have three elder brothers been
Mow'd down by death; 'tis the decree of Heaven,
The house of the Sixth Charles is doom'd to fall.

SOREL. In thee 'twill rise with renovated life!
Oh, in thyself have faith!—Believe me, King,
Not vainly hath a gracious destiny
Redeem'd thee from the ruin of thy house,
And by thy brethren's death exalted thee,
The youngest born, to an unlook'd for throne.
Heaven in thy gentle spirit hath prepared
The leech to remedy the thousand ills
By party rage inflicted on the land.
The flames of civil discord thou wilt quench,
And my heart tells me, thou'lt establish peace,
And found anew the monarchy of France.

CHAS. . Not I! The rude and storm-vexed times require
A pilot formed by nature to command.
A peaceful nation I could render happy,

A wild rebellious people not subdue.
I never with the sword could open hearts
Against me closed in hatred's cold reserve.

SOREL. The people's eye is dimm'd, an error blinds them,
But this delusion will not long endure;
The day is not far distant, when the love,
Deep rooted in the bosom of the French,
Towards their native monarch will revive,
Together with the ancient jealousy,
Which forms a barrier 'twixt the hostile nations.
The haughty foe precipitates his doom.
Hence, with rash haste abandon not the field,
With dauntless front contest each foot of ground,
As thine own heart defend the town of Orleans!
Let every boat be sunk beneath the wave,
Each bridge be burned, sooner than carry thee
Across the Loire, the bound'ry of thy realm,
The Stygian flood, o'er which there's no return.

CHAS. . What could be done I have done. I have offer'd,
In single fight, to combat for my crown.—
I was refused. In vain my people bleed,
In vain my towns are levell'd with the dust.
Shall I, like that unnatural mother, see
My child in pieces severed with the sword?
No; I forego my claim, that it may live.

DUNOIS. How, Sire! Is this fit language for a king?
Is a crown thus renounced? Thy meanest subject,
For his opinion's sake, his hate and love,
Sets property and life upon a cast;
When civil war hangs out her bloody flag
Each private end is drowned in party zeal.
The husbandman forsakes his plough, the wife
Neglects her distaff; children, and old men,
Don the rude garb of war; the citizen
Consigns his town to the devouring flames,
The peasant burns the produce of his fields;
And all to injure or advantage thee,
And to achieve the purpose of his heart.
Men show no mercy, and they wish for none,
When they at honour's call maintain the fight,
Or for their idols or their gods contend.
A truce to such effeminate pity, then,

Which is not suited to a monarch's breast.
—Thou didst not heedlessly provoke the war;
As it commenced, so let it spend its fury.
It is the law of destiny that nations
Should for their monarchs immolate themselves.
We Frenchmen recognise this sacred law,
Nor would annul it. Base, indeed, the nation,
That for its honour ventures not its all.

CHARLES (*to the* SENATORS).

You've heard my last resolve—expect no other.
May God protect you! I can do no more.

DUNOIS. As thou dost turn thy back upon thy realm,
So may the God of battle aye avert
His visage from thee. Thou forsak'st thyself,
So I forsake thee. Not the power combined
Of England and rebellious Burgundy,
Thy own mean spirit hurls thee from the throne.
Born heroes ever were the kings of France;
Thou wert a craven even from thy birth.

[*To the* SENATORS.

The King abandons you. But I will throw
Myself into your town—my father's town—
And 'neath its ruins find a soldier's grave.

[*He is about to depart.*—AGNES SOREL *detains him.*

SOL (*to the* KING).

Oh let him not depart in anger from thee!
Harsh words his lips have utter'd, but his heart
Is true as gold. 'Tis he, himself, my King,
Who loves thee, and hath often bled for thee.
Dunois! confess, the heat of noble wrath
Made thee forget thyself—and oh, do thou
Forgive a faithful friend's o'erhasty speech!
Come! let me quickly reconcile your hearts,
Ere anger bursteth forth in quenchless flame!

[DUNOIS *looks fixedly at the* KING, *and appears to await an answer.*

CHAS. . Our way lies over the Loire. Du Châtel!
See all our equipage embarked.

DUNOIS (*quickly to* SOREL). Farewell!

[*He turns quickly round, and goes out.*—*The* SENATORS *follow.*

SOREL (*wringing her hands in despair*).
O, if he goes, we are forsaken quite!
—Follow, La Hire! O seek to soften him!
[LA HIRE *goes out.*

SCENE VI.

CHARLES, SOREL, DU CHATEL.

CHAS. Is, then. the sceptre such a peerless treasure?
Is it so hard to loose it from our grasp?
Believe me, 'tis more galling to endure
The domineering rule of these proud vassals.
To be dependent on their will and pleasure
Is, to a noble heart, more bitter far
Than to submit to fate.
[*To* DU CHATEL, *who still lingers.*
Du Châtel, go,
And do what I commanded!

DU CHATEL (*throws himself at the* KING'S *feet*).
Oh, my King!

CHAS. . No more! Thou'st heard my absolute resolve!

CHATEL. Sire! with the Duke of Burgundy make peace!
'Tis the sole outlet from destruction left!

CHAS. . Thou giv'st this counsel, and thy blood alone
Can ratify this peace?

DU CHATEL. Here is my head.
I oft have risked it for thee in the fight,
And with a joyful spirit I, for thee,
Would lay it down upon the block of death.
Conciliate the Duke! Deliver me
To the full measure of his wrath, and let
My flowing blood appease the ancient hate!

CHARLES (*looks at him for some time in silence, and with deep emotion*).
Can it be true? Am I, then, sunk so low,
That even friends, who read my inmost heart,
Point out, for my escape, the path of shame?
Yes, now I recognise my abject fall.
My honour is no more confided in.

CHATEL. Reflect—

CHARLES. Be silent, and incense me not!
Had I ten realms, on which to turn my back,

With my friend's life I would not purchase them.
—Do what I have commanded. Hence, and see
My equipage embarked.

DU CHATEL. 'Twill speedily
Be done.

[*He stands up and retires.*—AGNES SOREL *weeps passionately.*

SCENE VII.

The Royal Palace at Chinon.

CHARLES, AGNES SOREL.

CHARLES (*seizing the hand of* AGNES).
My Agnes, be not sorrowful!
Beyond the Loire we still shall find a France;
We are departing to a happier land,
Where laughs a milder, an unclouded sky,
And gales more genial blow; we there shall meet
More gentle manners; song abideth there,
And love and life in richer beauty bloom.

SOREL. Oh, must I contemplate this day of wo!
The King must roam in banishment! the son
Depart, an exile from his father's house,
And turn his back upon his childhood's home!
O pleasant, happy land, that we forsake,
Ne'er shall we tread thee joyously again!

SCENE VIII.

LA HIRE *returns*, CHARLES, SOREL.

SOREL. You come alone? You do not bring him back?
[*Observing him more closely.*
La Hire! What news? What does that look announce?
Some new calamity?

LA HIRE. Calamity
Hath spent itself; sunshine is now return'd.

SOREL. What is it? I implore you.

LA HIRE (*to the* KING). Summon back
The delegates from Orleans!

CHARLES. Why? What is it?

HIRE. Summon them back! Thy fortune is reversed.
A battle has been fought, and thou hast conquer'd.

SOREL. Conquer'd! O heavenly music of that word!
CHAS. . La Hire! A fabulous report deceives thee:
Conquer'd!—In conquest I believe no more.
HIRE. . Still greater wonders thou wilt soon believe.
—Here cometh the Archbishop. To thine arms
He leadeth back Dunois.—
SOREL. O beauteous flower
Of victory, which doth the heavenly fruits
Of peace and reconcilement bear at once!

SCENE IX.

The same, ARCHBISHOP OF RHEIMS, DUNOIS, DU CHATEL, *with* RAOUL, *a Knight in armour.*

ARCHBISHOP (*leading* DUNOIS *to the* KING, *and joining their hands*).
Princes, embrace! Let rage and discord cease,
Since Heaven itself hath for our cause declared.
[DUNOIS *embraces the* KING
CHAS. . Relieve my wonder and perplexity.
What may this solemn earnestness portend?
Whence this unlook'd for change of fortune?
ARCHBISHOP (*leads the Knight forward, and presents him to the* KING). Speak!
RAOUL. We had assembled sixteen regiments
Of Lotharingian troops, to join your host;
And Baudricourt, a Knight of Vaucouleurs,
Was our commander. Having gain'd the heights
By Vermanton, we wound our downward way
Into the valley water'd by the Yonne;
There, in the plain before us, lay the foe,
And when we turn'd, arms glitter'd in our rear.
We saw ourselves surrounded by two hosts,
And could not hope for conquest or for flight.
Then sank the bravest heart, and in despair
We all prepared to lay our weapons down.
The leaders with each other anxiously
Sought counsel and found none,—when to our eyes
A spectacle of wonder show'd itself!
For suddenly from forth the thickets' depths

A maiden, on her head a polish'd helm,
Like a war-goddess, issued; terrible
Yet lovely was her aspect, and her hair
In dusky ringlets round her shoulders fell.
A heavenly radiance shone around the height;
When she upraised her voice and thus address'd us:
"Why be dismay'd, brave Frenchmen? On the foe!
Were they more numerous than the ocean sands,
God and the holy Maiden lead you on!"
Then quickly from the standard-bearer's hand
She snatch'd the banner, and before our troop
With valiant bearing strode the wond'rous maid
Silent with awe, scarce knowing what we did,
The banner and the Maiden we pursue,
And fired with ardour, rush upon the foe,
Who, much amazed, stand motionless and view
The miracle with fix'd and wondering gaze.—
Then, as if seized by terror sent from God,
They suddenly betake themselves to flight,
And casting arms and armour to the ground,
Disperse in wild disorder o'er the field.
No leader's call, no signal now avails;
Senseless from terror, without looking back,
Horses and men plunge headlong in the stream,
Where they without resistance are despatch'd.
It was a slaughter rather than a fight!
Two thousand of the foe bestrew'd the field,
Not reckoning numbers swallow'd by the flood,
While of our company not one was slain.

CHAS. 'Tis strange, by Heaven! most wonderful and strange!

SOREL. A maiden work'd this miracle, you say?
Whence did she come? Who is she?

RAOUL. Who she is
She will reveal to no one but the King!
She calls herself a seer and prophetess
Ordain'd by God, and promises to raise
The siege of Orleans ere the moon shall change.
The people credit her, and thirst for war.
The host she follows—she'll be here anon.

[*The ringing of bells is heard, together with the clang of arms.*

Hark to the din! The pealing of the bells!
'Tis she! The people greet God's messenger.

CHARLES (*to* DU CHATEL).

Conduct her hither.— [*To the* ARCHBISHOP.
What should I believe?
A maiden brings me conquest even now,
When nought can save me but a hand divine!
This is not in the common course of things.
And dare I here believe a miracle?

MANY VOICES (*behind the scene*).

Hail to the Maiden!—the deliverer!

CHAS. . She comes! Dunois, now occupy my place!
We will make trial of this wond'rous maid.
Is she indeed inspired and sent by God,
She will be able to discern the King.

[DUNOIS *seats himself; the* KING *stands at his right hand,* AGNES SOREL *near him; the* ARCHBISHOP *and the others opposite; so that the intermediate space remains vacant*

SCENE X.

The same. JOHANNA, *accompanied by the Councillors and many Knights, who occupy the background of the scene; she advances with noble bearing, and slowly surveys the company*

DUNOIS (*after a long and solemn pause*).

Art thou the wond'rous Maiden—

JOHANNA (*interrupts him, regarding him with dignity*).

Bastard of Orleans, thou wilt tempt thy God!
This place abandon, which becomes thee not!
To this more mighty one the Maid is sent.

[*With a firm step she approaches the* KING, *bows one knee before him, and, rising immediately, steps back. All present express their astonishment,* DUNOIS *forsakes his seat, which is occupied by the* KING.

CHAS. . Maiden, thou ne'er hast seen my face before.
Whence hast thou then this knowledge?

JOHANNA. Thee I saw

When none beside, save God in heaven, beheld thee
[*She approaches the* KING *and speaks mysteriously.*
Bethink thee, Dauphin, in the bygone night!
When all around lay buried in deep sleep,
Thou from thy couch didst rise and offer up
An earnest prayer to God. Let these retire
And I will name the subject of thy prayer.

CHAS. . What I to Heaven confided need not be
From men conceal'd. Disclose to me my prayer,
And I shall doubt no more that God inspires thee

JOHAN. Three prayers thou offer'dst, Dauphin; listen now
Whether I name them to thee! Thou didst pray
That if there were appended to this crown
Unjust possession, or if heavy guilt,
Not yet atoned for, from thy father's times,
Occasion'd this most lamentable war,
God would accept thee as a sacrifice,
Have mercy on thy people, and pour forth
Upon thy head the chalice of his wrath.

CHARLES (*steps back with awe*).
Who art thou, mighty one? Whence comest thou?
[*All express their astonishment*

JOHAN. To God thou offeredst this second prayer:
That if it were His will and high decree
To take away the sceptre from thy race,
And from thee to withdraw whate'er thy sires,
The monarchs of this kingdom, once possess'd,
He in his mercy would preserve to thee
Three priceless treasures—a contented heart,
Thy friend's affection, and thine Agnes' love.
[*The* KING *conceals his face: the spectators express their astonishment.—After a pause,*
Thy third petition shall I name to thee?

CHAS. . Enough—I credit thee! This doth surpass
Mere human knowledge: thou art sent by God!

ARCHB. Who art thou, wonderful and holy maid?
What favour'd region bore thee? What blest pair,
Belov'd of Heaven, may claim thee as their child?

JOHAN. Most reverend father, I am nam'd Johanna,
I am a shepherd's lowly daughter, born
In Dom Remi, a village of my King,

Included in the diocese of Toul,
And from a child I kept my father's sheep.
—And much and frequently I heard them tell
Of the strange islanders, who o'er the sea
Had come to make us slaves, and on us force
A foreign lord, who loveth not the people;
How the great city, Paris, they had seized,
And had usurp'd dominion o'er the realm.
Then earnestly God's Mother I implor'd
To save us from the shame of foreign chains,
And to preserve to us our lawful King.
Not distant from my native village stands
An ancient image of the Virgin blest,
To which the pious pilgrims oft repair'd;
Hard by a holy oak, of blessed power,
Standeth, far-fam'd through wonders manifold.
Beneath the oak's broad shade I lov'd to sit,
Tending my flock—my heart still drew me there.
And if by chance among the desert hills
A lambkin strayed, 'twas shown me in a dream,
When in the shadow of this oak I slept.
—And once, when through the night beneath this tree
In pious adoration I had sat,
Resisting sleep, the Holy One appear'd,
Bearing a sword and banner, otherwise
Clad like a shepherdess, and thus she spake:—
"'Tis I; arise, Johanna! leave thy flock.
The Lord appoints thee to another task!
Receive this banner! Gird thee with this sword!
Therewith exterminate my people's foes;
Conduct to Rheims thy royal master's son,
And crown him with the kingly diadem!"
And I made answer: "How may I presume
To undertake such deeds, a tender maid,
Unpractis'd in the dreadful art of war!"
And she replied: "A maiden pure and chaste
Achieves whate'er on earth is glorious,
If she to earthly love ne'er yields her heart.
Look upon me! a virgin, like thyself;
I to the Christ, the Lord divine, gave birth,
And am myself divine!"—Mine eyelids then

She touch'd, and when I upward turn'd my gaze,
Heaven's wide expanse was fill'd with angel-boys,
Who bore white lilies in their hands, while tones
Of sweetest music floated through the air.
—And thus on three successive nights appear'd
The Holy One, and cried—" Arise, Johanna!
The Lord appoints thee to another task!"
And when the third night she reveal'd herself,
Wrathful she seem'd, and chiding spake these words
" Obedience, woman's duty here on earth;
Severe endurance is her heavy doom;
She must be purified through discipline;
Who serveth here, is glorified above!"
While thus she spake, she let her shepherd garb
Fall from her, and as Queen of Heaven stood forth,
Enshrined in radiant light, while golden clouds
Upbore her slowly to the realms of bliss.

[*All are moved;* AGNES SOREL *weeping, hides her face on the bosom of the* KING.

ARCHBISHOP (*after a long pause*).
Before divine credentials such as these
Each doubt of earthly prudence must subside.
Her deeds attest the truth of what she speaks,
For God alone such wonders can achieve.

DUNOIS. I credit not her wonders, but her eyes,
Which beam with innocence and purity.

CHAS. . Am I, a sinner, worthy of such favour?
Infallible, All-searching eye, thou seest
Mine inmost heart, my deep humility!

JOHAN. Humility shines brightly in the skies;
Thou art abased, hence God exalteth thee.

CHAS. . Shall I indeed withstand mine enemies?

JOHAN. France I will lay submissive at thy feet!

CHAS. . And Orleans, say'st thou, will not be surrender'd?

JOHAN. The Loire shall sooner roll its waters back.

CHAS. . Shall I in triumph enter into Rheims?

JOHAN. I through ten thousand foes will lead thee there.

[*The knights make a noise with their lances and shields, and evince signs of courage.*

DUNOIS. Appoint the Maiden to command the host!

We follow blindly wheresoe'er she leads!
The holy one's prophetic eye shall guide,
And this brave sword from danger shall protect her!

HIRE. . A universe in arms we will not fear,
If she, the mighty one, precede our troops.
The God of battle walketh by her side;
Let her conduct us on to victory!

[*The Knights clang their arms and press forward.*

CHAS. . Yes, holy Maiden, do thou lead mine host;
My chiefs and warriors shall submit to thee.
This sword of matchless temper, proved in war,
Sent back in anger by the Constable,
Hath found a hand more worthy. Prophetess,
Do thou receive it, and henceforward be—

JOHAN. No, noble Dauphin! conquest to my Liege
Is not accorded through this instrument
Of earthly might. I know another sword
Wherewith I am to conquer, which to thee,
I, as the Spirit taught, will indicate;
Let it be hither brought.

CHARLES. Name it, Johanna.

JOHAN. Send to the ancient town of Fierbois;
There in Saint Catherine's churchyard is a vault
Where lie in heaps the spoils of bygone war.
Among them is the sword, which I must use.
It, by three golden lilies may be known,
Upon the blade impress'd. Let it be brought,
For thou, my Liege, shalt conquer through this sword.

CHAS . Perform what she commands.

JOHANNA. And a white banner,
Edg'd with a purple border, let me bear.
Upon this banner let the Queen of Heaven
Be pictur'd, with the beauteous Jesus child,
Floating in glory o'er this earthly ball.
For so the Holy Mother show'd it me.

CHAS. . So be it as thou sayest.

JOHANNA (*to the* ARCHBISHOP). Reverend Bishop:
Lay on my head thy consecrated hands!
Pronounce a blessing, Father, on thy child!

[*She kneels down.*

ARCH. . Not blessings to receive, but to dispense
Art thou appointed.—Go, with power divine!
But we are sinners all and most unworthy.
[*She rises: a* PAGE *enters.*
PAGE. . A herald from the English generals.
JOHAN. Let him appear, for he is sent by God!
[*The* KING *motions to the* PAGE, *who retires.*

SCENE XI.

The HERALD. *The same.*

CHAS. . Thy tidings, Herald? What thy message? Speak!
HER. . Who is it, who for Charles of Valois,
The Count of Pointhieu, in this presence speaks?
DUNOIS. Unworthy Herald! base, insulting knave!
Dost thou presume the Monarch of the French
Thus in his own dominions to deny?
Thou art protected by thine office, else—
HER. . One king alone is recognised by France,
And he resideth in the English camp.
CHAS. . Peace, peace, good cousin! Speak thy message, Herald!
HER. . My noble general laments the blood
Which hath already flow'd, and still must flow.
Hence, in the scabbard holding back the sword,
Before by storm the town of Orleans falls,
He offers thee an amicable treaty.
CHAS. . Proceed!
JOHANNA (*stepping forward*).
Permit me, Dauphin, in thy stead,
To parley with this herald.
CHARLES. Do so, Maid!
Determine thou, for peace, or bloody war.
JOHANNA (*to the* HERALD).
Who sendeth thee? Who speaketh through thy mouth?
HER. . The Earl of Salisbury; the British chief.
JOHAN. Herald, 'tis false! The earl speaks not through thee.
Only the living speak, the dead are silent.
HER. . The earl is well, and full of lusty strength;
He lives to bring down ruin on your heads.
JOHAN. When thou didst quit the British camp, he lived.
This morn, while gazing from Le Tournelle's tower,
A ball from Orleans struck him to the ground

—Smil'st thou, that I discern what is remote?
Not to my words give credence; but believe
The witness of thine eyes! his funeral train
Thou shalt encounter as thou goest hence!
Now, Herald, speak, and do thine errand here.

HER. If what is hidden thou canst thus reveal,
Thou know'st mine errand ere I tell it thee.

JOHAN. It boots me not to know it. But do thou
Give ear unto my words! This message bear
In answer to the lords who sent thee here.
—Monarch of England, and ye haughty dukes,
Bedford and Gloucester, regents of this realm!
To Heaven's high King ye are accountable
For all the blood that hath been shed! Restore
The keys of all the cities ta'en by force,
In opposition to God's holy law!
The Maiden cometh from the King of Heaven
And offers you or peace, or bloody war.
Choose ye! for this I say, that ye may know it:
To you this beauteous realm is not assign'd
By Mary's Son;—but God hath given it
To Charles, my lord and Dauphin, who ere long
Will enter Paris with a monarch's pomp,
Attended by the great ones of his realm.
—Now, Herald, go, and speedily depart,
For ere thou canst attain the British camp
And do thine errand, is the Maiden there,
To plant the sign of victory at Orleans.

[*She retires. In the midst of a general movement, the curtain falls.*

ACT II.

Landscape, bounded by Rocks.

SCENE I.

TALBOT *and* LIONEL, *English Generals*, PHILIP, DUKE OF BURGUNDY, FASTOLFE, *and* CHATILLON, *with Soldiers and Banners.*

TALBOT. Here let us make a halt, beneath these rocks,
And pitch our camp, in case our scatter'd troops,
Dispers'd in panic fear, again should rally.

Choose trusty sentinels, and guard the heights!
'Tis true the darkness shields us from pursuit,
And sure I am, unless the foe have wings,
We need not fear surprisal.—Still 'tis well
To practise caution, for we have to do
With a bold foe, and have sustain'd defeat.

[FASTOLFE *goes out with the soldiers*

LIONEL. Defeat! My general, do not speak that word.
It stings me to the quick to think the French
To-day have seen the backs of Englishmen.
—O, Orleans! Orleans! Grave of England's glory!
Our honour lies upon thy fatal plains.
Defeat most ignominious and burlesque!
Who will in future years believe the tale!
The victors of Poictiers and Agincourt,
Cressy's bold heroes, routed by a woman?

BURG. . That must console us. Not by mortal power,
But by the devil, have we been o'erthrown!

TALBOT. The devil of our own stupidity!
—How, Burgundy? Do princes quake and fear
Before the phantom which appals the vulgar?
Credulity is but a sorry cloak
For cowardice—Your people first took flight.

BURG. . None stood their ground. The flight was general.

TALBOT. 'Tis false! Your wing fled first. You wildly broke
Into our camp, exclaiming: "Hell is loose,
The devil combats on the side of France!"
And thus you brought confusion 'mong our troops

LIONEL. You can't deny it. Your wing yielded first.

BURG. . Because the brunt of battle there commenced.

TALBOT. The Maiden knew the weakness of our camp;
She rightly judged where fear was to be found.

BURG. . How? Shall the blame of our disaster rest
With Burgundy?

LIONEL. By Heav'n! were we alone,
We English, never had we Orleans lost!

BURG. . No, truly!—for ye ne'er had Orleans seen!
Who opened you a way into this realm,
And reached you forth a kind and friendly hand,
When you descended on this hostile coast?

Who was it crowned your Henry at Paris,
And unto him subdued the people's hearts?
Had this Burgundian arm not guided you
Into this realm, by Heaven ye ne'er had seen
The smoke ascending from a single hearth!

LIONEL. Were conquests with big words effected, Duke,
You, doubtless, would have conquered France alone.

BURG. . The loss of Orleans angers you, and now
You vent your gall on me, your friend and ally.
What lost us Orleans, but your avarice?
The city was prepared to yield to me,
Your envy was the sole impediment.

TALBOT. We did not undertake the siege for you.

BURG. . How would it stand with you, if I withdrew
With all my host? .

LIONEL. We should not be worse off,
Than when, at Agincourt, we prov'd a match
For you, and all the banded power of France.

BURG. . Yet much ye stood in need of our alliance,
The regent purchased it at heavy cost.

TALBOT. Most dearly, with the forfeit of our honour,
At Orleans, have we paid for it to-day.

BURG. . Urge me no further, Lords. Ye may repent it!
Did I forsake the banners of my King,
Draw down upon my head the traitor's name,
To be insulted thus by foreigners?
Why am I here to combat against France?
If I must needs endure ingratitude,
Let it come rather from my native King!

TALBOT. You're in communication with the Dauphin,
We know it well, but we shall soon find means
To guard ourselves 'gainst treason.

BURGUNDY. Death and Hell!
Am I encounter'd thus?—Chatillon, hark!
Let all my troops prepare to quit the camp.
We will retire into our own domain.

[CHATILLON *goes out.*

LIONEL. God speed you there! Never did Britain's fame
More brightly shine, than when she stood alone,
Confiding solely in her own good sword.

Let each one fight his battle for himself,
For 'tis eternal truth, that English blood
Cannot, with honour, blend with blood of France.

Scene II.

The same Queen Isabel, *attended by a Page.*

Isabel What must I hear? This fatal strife forbear!
What brain-bewildering planet o'er your minds
Sheds dire perplexity? When unity
Alone can save you, will you part in hate,
And, warring 'mong yourselves, prepare your doom?
—I do entreat you, noble Duke, recall
Your hasty order. You, renowned Talbot,
Seek to appease an irritated friend!
Come, Lionel, aid me to reconcile
These haughty spirits, and establish peace.

Lionel. Not I, Madame. It is all one to me.
'Tis my belief, when things are misallied,
The sooner they part company the better.

Isabel. How? Do the arts of hell, which on the field
Wrought such disastrous ruin, even here
Bewilder and befool us? Who began
This fatal quarrel? Speak!—Lord General!
Your own advantage did you so forget,
As to offend your worthy friend and ally?
What could you do without his powerful arm?
'Twas he who placed your Monarch on the throne,
He holds him there, and he can hurl him thence;
His army strengthens you—still more his name.
Were England all her citizens to pour
Upon our coasts, she never o'er this realm
Would gain dominion, did she stand alone;
No! France can only be subdued by France!

Talbot. A faithful friend we honour as we ought;
Discretion warns us to beware the false.

Burg. The liar's brazen front beseemeth him
Who would absolve himself from gratitude.

Isabel. How, noble Duke? Could you so far renounce
Your princely honour, and your sense of shame,
As clasp the hand of him who slew your sire?
Are you so mad to entertain the thought

Of cordial reconcilement with the Dauphin,
Whom you, yourself, have hurl'd to ruin's brink?
His overthrow you have well nigh achieved,
And madly now would you renounce your work?
Here stand your allies. Your salvation lies
In an indissoluble bond with England.

BURG. . Far is my thought from treaty with the Dauphin;
But the contempt and insolent demeanour
Of haughty England I will not endure.

ISABEL. Come, noble Duke! Excuse a hasty word.
Heavy the grief which bows the general down,
And well you know, misfortune makes unjust.
Come! come! embrace; let me this fatal breach
Repair at once, ere it becomes eternal.

TALBOT. What think you, Burgundy? A noble heart,
By reason vanquish'd, doth confess its fault.
A wise and prudent word the Queen hath spoken;
Come, let my hand, with friendly pressure, heal
The wound inflicted by my angry tongue.

BURG. . Discreet the counsel offered by the Queen!
My just wrath yieldeth to necessity.

ISABEL. 'Tis well! Now, with a brotherly embrace,
Confirm and seal the new-established bond;
And may the winds disperse what hath been spoken.
[BURGUNDY *and* TALBOT *embrace.*

LIONEL (*contemplating the group aside*).
Hail to an union by the Furies planned!

ISABEL. Fate hath proved adverse, we have lost a battle,
But do not, therefore, let your courage sink.
The Dauphin, in despair of heavenly aid,
Doth make alliance with the powers of Hell;
Vainly his soul he forfeits to the Devil,
For Hell itself cannot deliver him.
A conquering maiden leads the hostile force;
Yours, I, myself, will lead; to you I'll stand
In place of maiden or of prophetess.

LIONEL. Madame, return to Paris! We desire
To war with trusty weapons, not with women.

TALBOT. Go! go! Since your arrival in the camp,
Fortune hath fled our banners, and our course
Hath still been retrograde.

BURGUNDY. Depart at once!
Your presence here doth scandalize the host.
ISABEL (*looks from one to the other with astonishment*).
This, Burgundy, from you? Do you take part
Against me with these thankless English lords?
BURG.. Go! go! The thought of combating for you
Unnerves the courage of the bravest men.
ISABEL. I scarce among you have establish'd peace,
And you already form a league against me!
TALBOT. Go, in God's name. When you have left the camp.
No devil will again appal our troops,
ISABEL. Say am I not your true confederate?
Are we not banded in a common cause?
TALBOT. Thank God! your cause of quarrel is not ours.
We combat in an honourable strife.
BURG.. A father's bloody murder I avenge;
Stern filial duty consecrates my arms.
TALBOT. Confess at once! Your conduct towards the Dauphin
Is an offence alike to God and man.
ISABEL. Curses blast him and his posterity!
The shameless son who sins against his mother!
BURG.. Ay! to avenge a husband and a father!
ISABEL. To judge his mother's conduct he presumed!
LIONEL. That was, indeed, irreverent in a son!
ISABEL. And me, forsooth, he banish'd from the realm!
TALBOT. Urged to the measure by the public voice.
ISABEL. A curse light on him if I e'er forgive him!
Rather than see him on his father's throne—
TALBOT. His mother's honour you would sacrifice!
ISABEL. Your feeble natures cannot comprehend
The vengeance of an outrag'd mother's heart.
Who pleasures me, I love; who wrongs, I hate.
If he who wrongs me chance to be my son,
All the more worthy is he of my hate.
The life I gave, I will again take back
From him who doth, with ruthless violence,
The bosom rend which bore and nourish'd him.
Ye, who do thus make war upon the Dauphin,
What rightful cause have ye to plunder him?
What crime hath he committed against you?
What insult are you call'd on to avenge?

Ambition, paltry envy, goad you on;
I have a right to hate him—he's my son.

TALBOT. He feels his mother in her dire revenge!

ISABEL. Mean hypocrites! I hate you and despise.
Together with the world, you cheat yourselves!
With robber-hands you English seek to clutch
This realm of France, where you have no just right,
Nor equitable claim, to so much earth
As could be cover'd by your charger's hoof.
—This Duke, too, whom the people style The Good,
Doth to a foreign lord, his country's foe,
For gold betray the birthland of his sires.
And yet is justice ever on your tongue.
—Hypocrisy I scorn. Such as I am,
So let the world behold me!

BURGUNDY. It is true!
Your reputation you have well maintain'd.

ISABEL. I've passions and warm blood, and as a queen
Came to this realm to live, and not to seem.
Should I have lingered out a joyless life
Because the curse of adverse destiny
To a mad consort join'd my blooming youth?
More than my life I prize my liberty.
And who assails me here—But why should I
Stoop to dispute with you about my rights?
Your sluggish blood flows slowly in your veins!
Strangers to pleasure, ye know only rage!
This duke too—who, throughout his whole career,
Hath waver'd to and fro, 'twixt good and ill—
Can neither hate nor love with his whole heart.
—I go to Melun. Let this gentleman,
[*Pointing to* LIONEL.
Who doth my fancy please, attend me there,
To cheer my solitude, and you may work
Your own good pleasure! I'll inquire no more
Concerning the Burgundians or the English.
[*She beckons to her* PAGE, *and is about to re tire*

LIONEL. Rely upon us, we will send to Melun
The fairest youths whom we in battle take.
[*Coming back.*

ISABEL. Skilful your arm to wield the sword of death,
The French alone can round the polish'd phrase.
[*She goes out.*

SCENE III.

TALBOT, BURGUNDY, LIONEL.

TALBOT. Heavens! What a woman!
LIONEL. Now, brave generals,
Your counsel! Shall we prosecute our flight,
Or turn, and with a bold and sudden stroke
Wipe out the foul dishonour of to-day?
BURG. . We are too weak, our soldiers are dispersed,
The recent terror still unnerves the host.
TALBOT Blind terror, sudden impulse of a moment,
Alone occasioned our disastrous rout.
This phantom of the terror-stricken brain,
More closely view'd, will vanish into air.
My counsel, therefore, is, at break of day,
To lead the army back, across the stream,
To meet the enemy.
BURGUNDY. Consider well—
LIONEL. Your pardon! Here is nothing to consider
What we have lost we must at once retrieve,
Or look to be eternally disgraced.
TALBOT. It is resolved. To-morrow morn we fight,
This dread-inspiring phantom to destroy,
Which thus doth blind and terrify the host
Let us in fight encounter this she-devil.
If she oppose her person to our sword,
Trust me, she never will molest us more;
If she avoid our stroke—and be assured
She will not stand the hazard of a battle—
Then is the dire enchantment at an end!
LIONEL. So be it! And to me, my general, leave
This easy, bloodless combat, for I hope
Alive to take this ghost, and in my arms,
Before the Bastard's eyes—her paramour—
To bear her over to the English camp,
To be the sport and mockery of the host.
BURG. Make not too sure.
TALBOT. If she encounter me,

I shall not give her such a soft embrace.
Come now, exhausted nature to restore
Through gentle sleep. At daybreak we set forth.
[*They go out.*

Scene IV.

JOHANNA, *with her banner, in a helmet and breast-plate, otherwise attired as a woman.* DUNOIS, LA HIRE, *Knights, and Soldiers, appear above upon the rocky path, pass silently over, and appear immediately after on the scene.*

JOHANNA (*to the Knights, who surround her, while the procession continues above*).
The wall is scaled, and we are in the camp!
Now fling aside the mantle of still night,
Which hitherto hath veil'd your silent march,
And your dread presence to the foe proclaim
By your loud battle cry—God and the Maiden!

ALL (*exclaim aloud, amidst the loud clang of arms*).
God and the Maiden! [*Drums and trumpets.*

SENTINELS (*behind the scene*). The foe! The foe! The foe!

JOHAN. Ho! torches here! Hurl fire into the tents!
Let the devouring flames augment the horror,
While threatening death doth compass them around!
[*Soldiers hasten on, she is about to follow.*

DUNOIS (*holding her back*).
Thy part thou hast accomplish'd now, Johanna!
Into the camp thou hast conducted us.
The foe thou hast deliver'd in our hands.
Now from the rush of war remain apart!
The bloody consummation leave to us.

HIRE. Point out the path of conquest to the host;
Before us, in pure hand, the banner bear,
But wield the fatal weapon not thyself;
Tempt not the treacherous god of battle, for
He rageth blindly, and he spareth not.

JOHAN. Who dares impede my progress? Who presume
The Spirit to control, which guideth me?
Still must the arrow wing its destin'd flight!
Where danger is, there must Johanna be;
Nor now, nor here, am I foredoom'd to fall;

Our Monarch's royal brow I first must see
Invested with the round of sovereignty.
No hostile power can rob me of my life,
Till I've accomplish'd the commands of God.
[*She goes out.*

HIRE. . Come, let us follow after her, Dunois,
And let our valiant bosoms be her shield! [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

ENGLISH SOLDIERS *hurry over the stage* *Afterwards* TALBOT.

1 SOL. . The Maiden in the camp!

2 SOLDIER. Impossible!
It cannot be! How came she in the camp?

3 SOL. . Why through the air! The devil aided her!

4 AND 5 SOLDIERS.
Fly! fly! We are dead men!

TALBOT (*enters*).
They heed me not!—They stay not at my call!
The sacred bands of discipline are loosed!
As Hell had poured her damned legions forth,
A wild distracting impulse whirls along,
In one mad throng, the cowardly and brave.
I cannot rally e'en the smallest troop
To form a bulwark 'gainst the hostile flood,
Whose raging billows press into our camp!
—Do I alone retain my sober senses,
While all around in wild delirium rave?
To fly before these weak degenerate Frenchmen
Whom we in twenty battles have o'erthrown?—
Who is she then—the irresistible—
The dread-inspiring goddess, who doth turn
At once the tide of battle, and transform
To lions bold, a herd of timid deer?
A juggling minx, who plays the well-learn'd part
Of heroine, thus to appal the brave?
A woman snatch from me all martial fame?

SOLDIER (*rushes in*).
The Maiden comes! Fly, general! fly! fly!

TALBOT (*strikes him down*).
Fly thou, thyself, to Hell! This sword shall pierce
Who talks to me of fear, or coward flight!
[*He goes out.*

Scene VI.

The prospect opens. The English camp is seen in flames. Drums, flight and pursuit. After a while, Montgomery *enters.*

Montgomery (*alone*).

Where shall I flee? Foes all around and death! Lo! here
The furious general, who, with threatening sword, prevents
Escape, and drives us back into the jaws of death.
The dreadful Maiden there—the terrible—who, like
Devouring flame, destruction spreads; while all around
Appears no bush wherein to hide—no sheltering cave!
Oh, would that o'er the sea I never had come here!
Me miserable! Empty dreams deluded me—
Cheap glory to achieve on Gallia's martial fields·
And I am guided by malignant destiny
Into this murd'rous fight.—Oh, were I far, far hence,
Still in my peaceful home, on Severn's flowery banks,
Where in my father's house, in sorrow and in tears,
I left my mother and my fair young bride.

[Johanna *appears in the distance.*

Wo's me! What do I see! The dreadful form appears!
Arrayed in lurid light, she from the raging fire
Issues, as from the jaws of hell, a midnight ghost.
Where shall I go?—where flee? Already from afar
She seizes on me with her eye of fire, and flings
Her fatal and unerring coil, whose magic folds
With ever-tightening pressure bind my feet, and make
Escape impossible! Howe'er my heart rebels,
I am compell'd to follow with my gaze that form
Of dread!

[Johanna *advances towards him some steps; and again remains standing.*

She comes! I will not passively await
Her furious onset! Imploringly I'll clasp
Her knees! I'll sue to her for life. She is a woman,
I may perchance to pity move her by my tears!

[*While he is on the point of approaching her, she draws near.*

Scene VII.

Johanna, Montgomery.

Johan. Prepare to die! A British mother bore thee!
Montgomery (*falls at her feet*).
Fall back, terrific one! Forbear to strike
An unprotected foe! My sword and shield
I've flung aside, and supplicating fall
Defenceless at thy feet. A ransom take!
Extinguish not the precious light of life!
With fair possessions crown'd, my father dwells
In Wales' fair land, where among verdant meads
The winding Severn rolls his silver tide,
And fifty villages confess his sway.
With heavy gold he will redeem his son,
When he shall hear I'm in the camp of France.
Johan. Deluded mortal! to destruction doomed!
Thou'rt fallen in the Maiden's hand, from which
Redemption or deliverance there is none.
Had adverse fortune given thee a prey
To the fierce tiger or the crocodile—
Hadst robbed the lion-mother of her brood—
Compassion thou mightst hope to find and pity;
But to encounter me is certain death.
For my dread compact with the spirit realm—
The stern, inviolable—bindeth me,
To slay each living thing whom battle's God,
Full charged with doom, delivers to my sword.
Mont. . Thy speech is fearful, but thy look is mild;
Not dreadful art thou to contemplate near;
My heart is drawn towards thy lovely form.
O! by the mildness of thy gentle sex,
Attend my prayer. Compassionate my youth.
Johan. Name me not woman! Speak not of my sex!
Like to the bodiless spirits, who know nought
Of earth's humanities, I own no sex;
Beneath this vest of steel there beats no heart.
Mont. . O! by Love's sacred all pervading power,
To whom all hearts yield homage, I conjure thee
At home I left behind a gentle bride,
Beauteous as thou, and rich in blooming grace;
Weeping she waiteth her betrothed's return.

O! if thyself dost ever hope to love,
If in thy love thou hopest to be happy,
Then ruthless sever not two gentle hearts,
Together linked in love's most holy bond!

JOHAN. Thou dost appeal to earthly, unknown gods,
To whom I yield no homage. Of Love's bond,
By which thou dost conjure me, I know nought,
Nor ever will I know his empty service.
Defend thy life, for death doth summon thee.

MONT. . Take pity on my sorrowing parents, whom
I left at home. Doubtless thou, too, hast left
Parents, who feel disquietude for thee.

JOHAN. Unhappy man! thou dost remember me
How many mothers, of this land, your arms
Have rendered childless and disconsolate;
How many gentle children fatherless;
How many fair young brides dejected widows!
Let England's mothers now be taught despair,
And learn to weep the bitter tear, oft shed
By the bereav'd and sorrowing wives of France.

MONT. . 'Tis hard, in foreign lands to die unwept.

JOHAN. Who call'd you over to this foreign land,
To waste the blooming culture of our fields,
To chase the peasant from his household hearth,
And in our cities' peaceful sanctuary
To hurl the direful thunderbolt of war?
In the delusion of your hearts ye thought
To plunge in servitude the freeborn French,
And to attach their fair and goodly realm,
Like a small boat to your proud English bark!
Ye fools! The royal arms of France are hung
Fast by the throne of God; and ye as soon
From the bright wain of heaven might snatch a star,
As rend a single village from this realm,
Which shall remain inviolate for ever!
—The day of vengeance is at length arrived;
Not living shall ye measure back the sea,
The sacred sea—the boundary set by God
Betwixt our hostile nations—and the which
Ye ventur'd impiously to overpass.

MONTGOMERY (*lets go her hands*).
O, I must die! I feel the grasp of death!

JOHAN. Die, friend! Why tremble at the approach of death,
Of mortals the irrevocable doom?
Look upon me! I'm born a shepherd maid;
This hand, accustom'd to the peaceful crook,
Is all unused to wield the sword of death,
Yet, snatch'd away from childhood's peaceful haunts,
From the fond love of father and of sisters,
Urged by no idle dream of earthly glory,
But Heaven-appointed to achieve your ruin,
Like a destroying angel I must roam,
Spreading dire havoc round me, and at length
Myself must fall a sacrifice to death!
Never again shall I behold my home!
Still many of your people I must slay,
Still many widows make, but I at length
Myself shall perish, and fulfil my doom.
—Now thine fulfil. Arise! resume thy sword,
And let us fight for the sweet prize of life.

MONTGOMERY (*stands up*).
Now, if thou art a mortal like myself,
Can weapons wound thee, it may be assign'd
To this good arm to end my country's wo,
Thee sending, sorceress, to the depths of Hell.
In God's most gracious hands I leave my fate.
Accursed one! to thine assistance call
The fiends of Hell! Now combat for thy life!

[*He seizes his sword and shield, and rushes upon her; martial music is heard in the distance. —After a short conflict* MONTGOMERY *falls.*

SCENE VIII.

JOHANNA (*alone*).
To death thy foot did bear the—fare thee well!

[*She steps away from him and remains absorbed in thought.*

Virgin, thou workest mightily in me!
My feeble arm thou dost endue with strength,
And steep'st my woman's heart in cruelty.
In pity melts the soul and the hand trembles,
As it did violate some sacred fane,
To mar the goodly person of the foe.

Once I did shudder at the polish'd sheath,
But when 'tis needed, I'm possess'd with strength,
And as it were itself a thing of life,
The fatal weapon, in my trembling grasp,
Self-swayed, inflicteth the unerring stroke.

Scene IX.

A Knight *with closed visor*, Johanna.

Knight. Accursed one! thy hour of death is come!
Long have I sought thee on the battle field,
Fatal delusion! get thee back to hell,
Whence thou didst issue forth.

Johanna. Say, who art thou,
Whom his bad genius sendeth in my way?
Princely thy port, no Briton dost thou seem,
For the Burgundian colours stripe thy shield,
Before the which my sword inclines its point.

Knight. Vile castaway! Thou all unworthy art
To fall beneath a prince's noble hand.
The hangman's axe should thy accursed head
Cleave from thy trunk, unfit for such vile use
The royal duke of Burgundy's brave sword.

Johan. Art thou indeed that noble duke himself?

Knight (*raises his visor*).
I'm he, vile creature, tremble and despair!
The arts of hell shall not protect thee more,
Thou hast till now weak dastards overcome;
Now thou dost meet a man.

Scene X.

Dunois *and* La Hire. *The same.*

Dunois. Hold, Burgundy!
Turn! combat now with men, and not with maids.

Hire. . We will defend the holy prophetess;
First must thy weapon penetrate this breast.—

Burg. . I fear not this seducing Circe; no,
Nor you, whom she hath changed so shamefully!
Oh blush, Dunois! and do thou blush, La Hire!
To stoop thy valour to these hellish arts—
To be shield-bearer to a sorceress!

Come one—come all! He only who despairs
Of Heaven's protection, seeks the aid of Hell.
[*They prepare for combat,* JOHANNA *steps between*

JOHAN. Forbear!

BURGUNDY. Dost tremble for thy lover? Thus
Before thine eyes he shall—
[*He makes a thrust at* DUNOIS.

JOHANNA. Dunois, forbear!
Part them, La Hire! no blood of France must flow:
Not hostile weapons must this strife decide.
Above the stars 'tis otherwise decreed.
Fall back! I say—Attend and venerate
The Spirit, which hath seized, which speaks through me!

DUNOIS. Why, Maiden, now hold back my upraised arm?
Why check the just decision of the sword?
My weapon pants to deal the fatal blow
Which shall avenge and heal the woes of France.
[*She places herself in the midst and separates the parties.*

JOHAN. Fall back, Dunois! Stand where thou art, La Hire!
Somewhat I have to say to Burgundy.
[*When all is quiet*
What wouldst thou, Burgundy? Who is the foe
Whom eagerly thy murderous glances seek?
This prince is, like thyself, a son of France,—
This hero is thy countryman, thy friend;
I am a daughter of thy fatherland.
We all, whom thou art eager to destroy,
Are of thy friends;—our longing arms prepare
To clasp, our bending knees to honour thee.—
Our sword 'gainst thee is pointless, and that face
E'en in a hostile helm is dear to us,
For there we trace the features of our king.

BURG. What, syren! wilt thou with seducing words
Allure thy victim? Cunning sorceress,
Me thou deludest not. Mine ears are closed
Against thy treacherous words; and vainly dart
Thy fiery glances 'gainst this mail of proof.

To arms, Dunois!
With weapons let us fight, and not with words.

DUNOIS. First words, then weapons, Burgundy! Do words
With dread inspire thee? 'Tis a coward's fear,
And the betrayer of an evil cause.

JOHAN. 'Tis not imperious necessity
Which throws us at thy feet! We do not come
As suppliants before thee.—Look around!
The English tents are level with the ground,
And all the field is cover'd with your slain.
Hark! the war-trumpets of the French resound:
God hath decided—ours the victory!
Our new-cull'd laurel garland with our friend
We fain would share.—Come, noble fugitive!
Oh come where justice and where victory dwell!
Even I, the messenger of Heaven, extend
A sister's hand to thee. I fain would save
And draw thee over to our righteous cause!
Heaven hath declared for France! Angelic powers,
Unseen by thee, do battle for our King;
With lilies are the holy ones adorn'd.
Pure as this radiant banner is our cause;
Its blessed symbol is the Queen of Heaven.

BURG. Falsehood's fallacious words are full of guile,
But hers are pure and simple as a child's.
If evil spirits borrow this disguise,
They copy innocence triumphantly.
I'll hear no more. To arms, Dunois! to arms!
Mine ear, I feel, is weaker than mine arm.

JOHAN. You call me an enchantress, and accuse
Of hellish arts.—Is it the work of Hell
To heal dissension and to foster peace?
Comes holy concord from the depths below?
Say, what is holy, innocent, and good,
If not to combat for our fatherland?
Since when hath nature been so self-opposed,
That Heaven forsakes the just and righteous cause,
While Hell protects it? If my words are true,
Whence could I draw them but from Heaven above?
Who ever sought me in my shepherd-walks,

To teach the humble maid affairs of state?
I ne'er have stood with princes, to these lips
Unknown the arts of eloquence. Yet now,
When I have need of it to touch thy heart,
Insight and varied knowledge I possess;
The fate of empires and the doom of kings
Lie clearly spread before my childish mind,
And words of thunder issue from my mouth.

BURGUNDY (*greatly moved, looks at her with emotion and astonishment*).

How is it with me? Doth some heavenly power
Thus strangely stir my spirit's inmost depths?
—This pure, this gentle creature cannot lie!
No, if enchantment blinds me, 'tis from Heaven.
My spirit tells me she is sent from God.

JOHAN. Oh he is mov'd! I have not pray'd in vain,
Wrath's thundercloud dissolves in gentle tears,
And leaves his brow, while mercy's golden beams
Break from his eyes and gently promise peace.
—Away with arms, now clasp him to your hearts,
He weeps—he's conquer'd, he is ours once more!

[*Her sword and banner fall; she hastens to him with outstretched arms, and embraces him in great agitation.* LA HIRE *and* DUNOIS *throw down their swords, and hasten also to embrace him.*

ACT III.

Residence of the KING *at Chalons on the Marne.*

SCENE I.

DUNOIS, LA HIRE.

DUNOIS. We have been true heart-friends, brothers in arms,
Still have we battled in a common cause,
And held together amid toil and death.
Let not the love of woman rend the bond
Which hath resisted every stroke of fate.

HIRE. Hear me, my Prince!

DUNOIS. You love the wondrous maid,

And well I know the purpose of your heart.
You think without delay to seek the King,
And to entreat him to bestow on you
Her hand in marriage.—Of your bravery
The well-earn'd guerdon, he cannot refuse
But know,—ere I behold her in the arms
Of any other—

LA HIRE. Listen to me, Prince!

DUNOIS. 'Tis not the fleeting passion of the eye
Attracts me to her. My unconquer'd sense
Had set at nought the fiery shafts of love
Till I beheld this wondrous maiden, sent
By a divine appointment to become
The saviour of this kingdom, and my wife;
And on the instant in my heart I vow'd
A sacred oath, to bear her home, my bride.
For she alone who is endowed with strength
Can be the strong man's friend. This glowing heart
Longs to repose upon a kindred breast,
Which can sustain and comprehend its strength.

HIRE. How dare I venture, Prince, my poor deserts
To measure with your name's heroic fame!
When Count Dunois appeareth in the lists,
Each humbler suitor must forsake the field;
Still it doth ill become a shepherd maid
To stand as consort by your princely side.
The royal current in your veins would scorn
To mix with blood of baser quality.

DUNOIS. She, like myself, is holy Nature's child,
A child divine—hence we by birth are equal
She bring dishonour on a prince's hand,
Who is the holy Angel's bride, whose head
Is by a heavenly glory circled round,
Whose radiance far outshineth earthly crowns,
Who seeth lying far beneath her feet
All that is greatest, highest, of this earth;
For thrones on thrones, ascending to the stars,
Would fail to reach the height where she abides
In angel majesty!

HIRE. Our Monarch must decide.

DUNOIS. Not so! she must
Decide! Free hath she made this realm of France,
And she herself must freely give her heart.
HIRE. Here comes the King!

SCENE II.

CHARLES, AGNES SOREL, DU CHATEL, *and* CHATILLON.
The same.

CHARLES (*to* CHATILLON).
He comes! My title he will recognise,
And do me homage as his sovereign Liege?
CHATIL. Here, in his royal town of Chalons, Sire,
The Duke, my master, will fall down before thee.
—He did command me, as my lord and king,
To give thee greeting. He'll be here anon.
SOREL. He comes! Hail beauteous and auspicious day,
Which bringeth joy. and peace, and reconcilement!
CHATIL. The Duke, attended by two hundred knights,
Will hither come; he at thy feet will kneel;
But he expecteth not that thou to him
Shouldst yield the cordial greeting of a kinsman.
CHAS I long to clasp him to my throbbing heart.
CHATIL. The Duke entreats that at this interview,
No word be spoken of the ancient strife!
CHAS. . In Lethe be the past for ever sunk!
The smiling future now invites our gaze.
CHATIL. All who have combated for Burgundy
Shall be included in the amnesty.
CHAS. . So shall my realm be doubled in extent!
CHATIL. Queen Isabel. if she consent thereto,
Shall also be included in the peace.
CHAS. . She maketh war on me, not I on her.
With her alone it rests to end our quarrel.
CHATIL. Twelve knights shall answer for thy royal word
CHAS. . My word is sacred.
CHATILLON. The Archbishop shall
Between you break the consecrated host,
As pledge and seal of cordial reconcilement
CHAS. . Let my eternal weal be forfeited,
If my hand's friendly grasp belie my heart.
What other surety doth the Duke require?

CHATILLON (*glancing at* DU CHATEL).
I see one standing here, whose presence, Sire,
Perchance might poison the first interview.
[DU CHATEL *retires in silence.*
CHAS. . Depart, Du Châtel, and remain conceal'd
Until the Duke can bear thee in his sight.
[*He follows him with his eye, then hastens after and embraces him.*
True-hearted friend! Thou wouldst far more than this
Have done for my repose! [*Exit* DU CHATEL.
CHATIL. This instrument doth name the other points.
CHARLES (*to the* ARCHBISHOP).
Let it be settled. We agree to all.
We count no price too high to gain a friend.
Go now, Dunois, and with a hundred knights,
Give courteous conduct to the noble Duke.
Let the troops, garlanded with verdant boughs,
Receive their comrades with a joyous welcome.
Be the whole town arrayed in festal pomp,
And let the bells with joyous peal, proclaim
That France and Burgundy are reconcil'd.
[*A* PAGE *enters. Trumpets sound.*
Hark! What importeth that loud trumpet's call?
PAGE. . The Duke of Burgundy hath stayed his march. [*Exit.*
DUNOIS. Up! forth to meet him!
[*Exit with* LA HIRE *and* CHATILLON.
CHARLES (*to* SOREL).
My Agnes! thou dost weep! Even my strength
Doth almost fail me at this interview.
How many victims have been doom'd to fall
Ere we could meet in peace and reconcilement!
But every storm at length suspends its rage,
Day follows on the murkiest night; and still
When comes the hour, the latest fruits mature!
ARCHBISHOP (*at the window*).
The thronging crowds impede the Duke's advance;
He scarce can free himself. They lift him now
From off his horse; they kiss his spurs, his mantle.
CHAS. . They're a good people, in whom love flames forth
As suddenly as wrath.—In how brief space
They do forget that 'tis this very Duke

Who slew, in fight, their fathers and their sons;
The moment swallows up the whole of life!
—Be tranquil, Sorel! E'en thy passionate joy
Perchance might to his conscience prove a thorn.
Nothing should either shame or grieve him here.

Scene III.

The Duke of Burgundy, Dunois, La Hire, Chatillon, *and two other Knights of the* Duke's *train. The* Duke *remains standing at the door; the* King *inclines towards him;* Burgundy *immediately advances, and in the moment when he is about to throw himself upon his knees, the* King *receives him in his arms.*

Chas. . You have surprised us—it was our intent
To fetch you hither—but your steeds are fleet.
Burg. . They bore me to my duty.
[*He embraces* Sorel, *and kisses her brow.*
With your leave!
At Arras, niece, it is our privilege,
And no fair damsel may exemption claim.
Chas. . Rumour doth speak your court the seat of love,
The mart, where all that's beautiful must tarry.
Burg. . We are a traffic-loving people, Sire;
Whate'er of costly earth's wide realms produce,
For show and for enjoyment, is displayed
Upon our mart at Bruges; but above all
There woman's beauty is pre-eminent.
Sorel. More precious far is woman's truth; but it
Appeareth not upon the public mart.
Chas. . Kinsman, 'tis rumour'd to your prejudice,
That woman's fairest virtue you despise.
Burg. . The heresy inflicteth on itself
The heaviest penalty. 'Tis well for you,
From your own heart, my King, you learn'd betimes,
What a wild life hath late reveal'd to me.
[*He perceives the* Archbishop, *and extends his hand.*
Most reverend minister of God! your blessing!
You still are to be found on duty's path,
Where those must walk who would encounter you
Archb Now let my Master call me when he will;

My heart is full, I can with joy depart,
Since that mine eyes have seen this day!

BURGUNDY (*to* SOREL). 'Tis said
That of your precious stones you robb'd yourself,
Therefrom to forge 'gainst me the tools of war?
Bear you a soul so martial? Were you then
So resolute to work my overthrow?
Well, now our strife is over; what was lost
Will in due season all be found again.
Even your jewels have return'd to you.
Against me to make war they were design'd;
Receive them from me as a pledge of peace.

[*He receives a casket from one of the Attendants, and presents it to her open.* SOREL, *embarrassed, looks at the* KING.

CHAS. . Receive this present; 'tis a twofold pledge
Of reconcilement, and of fairest love.

BURGUNDY (*placing a diamond rose in her hair*).
Why, is it not the diadem of France?
With full as glad a spirit I would place
The golden circle on this lovely brow.

[*Taking her hand significantly.*

And count on me if, at some future time,
You should require a friend!

[AGNES SOREL *bursts into tears, and steps aside. The* KING *struggles with his feelings. The bystanders contemplate the two* PRINCES *with emotion.*

BURGUNDY (*after gazing round the circle, throws himself into the* KING'S *arms*).
O, my King!

[*At the same moment the three Burgundian Knights hasten to* DUNOIS, LA HIRE, *and the* ARCHBISHOP. *They embrace each other. The two* PRINCES *remain for a time speechless in each other's arms.*

I could renounce you! I could bear you hate!

CHAS. . Hush! hush! No further!

BURGUNDY. I this English King
Could crown! Swear fealty to this foreigner!
And you, my Sovereign, into ruin plunge!

CHAS. . Forget it! Every thing's forgiven now!
This single moment doth obliterate all!
'Twas a malignant star! A destiny!

BURGUNDY (*grasps his hand*).
Believe me, Sire, I'll make amends for all.
Your bitter sorrow I will compensate;
You shall receive your kingdom back entire,
A solitary village shall not fail!

CHAS. . We are united. Now I fear no foe.

BURG. . Trust me, it was not with a joyous spirit
That I bore arms against you. Did you know—
O wherefore sent you not this messenger?
[*Pointing to* SOREL.
I must have yielded to her gentle tears.
—Henceforth, since breast to breast we have embraced,
No power of hell again shall sever us!
My erring course ends here. His Sovereign's heart
Is the true resting place for Burgundy.

ARCHBISHOP (*steps between them*).
Ye are united, Princes! France doth rise
A renovated phœnix from its ashes.
Th' auspicious future greets us with a smile.
The country's bleeding wounds will heal again,
The villages, the desolated towns,
Rise in new splendour from their ruin'd heaps,
The fields array themselves in beauteous green—
But those who, victims of your quarrel, fell,
The dead, rise not again; the bitter tears,
Caused by your strife, remain for ever wept!
One generation hath been doom'd to wo,
On their descendants dawns a brighter day,
The gladness of the son wakes not the sire.
This the dire fruitage of your brother-strife!
Oh, Princes! learn from hence to pause with dread,
Ere from its scabbard ye unsheath the sword.
The man of power lets loose the god of war,
But not, obedient, as from fields of air
Returns the falcon to the sportsman's hand,
Doth the wild deity obey the call
Of mortal voice; nor will the Saviour's hand
A second time forth issue from the clouds.

BURG. . O Sire! an angel walketh by your side.
—Where is she? Why do I behold her not?
CHAS. . Where is Johanna? Wherefore faileth she
To grace the festival we owe to her?
ARCHB. She loves not, Sire, the idless of the court,
And when the heavenly mandate calls her not
Forth to the world's observance, she retires,
And doth avoid the notice of the crowd!
Doubtless, unless the welfare of the realm
Claims her regard, she communes with her God,
For still a blessing on her steps attends.

SCENE IV.

The same.

JOHANNA *enters. She is clad in armour, and wears a garland in her hair.*

CHAS. . Thou comest as a priestess deck'd, Johanna,
To consecrate the union form'd by thee!
BURG. . How dreadful was the Maiden in the fight!
How lovely circled by the beams of peace!
—My word, Johanna. have I now fulfill'd?
Art thou contented? Have I thine applause?
JOHAN. The greatest favour thou hast shown thyself.
Array'd in blessed light thou shinest now,
Who didst erewhile with bloody ominous ray,
Hang like a moon of terror in the heavens.
[*Looking round*
Many brave knights I find assembled here,
And joy's glad radiance beams in every eye;
One mourner, one alone I have encounter'd,
He must conceal himself, where all rejoice.
BURG. . And who is conscious of such heavy guilt,
That of our favour he must needs despair?
JOHAN. May he approach? Oh tell me that he may,—
Complete thy merit. Void the reconcilement
That frees not the whole heart. A drop of hate
Remaining in the cup of joy, converts
The blessed draught to poison.—Let there be
No deed so stain'd with blood, that Burgundy
Cannot forgive it on this day of joy!

BURG. . Ha! now I understand!
JOHANNA. And thou'lt forgive?
Thou wilt indeed forgive?—Come in, Duchâtel!
[*She opens the door and leads in* DUCHATEL, *who remains standing at a distance.*
The Duke is reconciled to all his foes,
And he is so to thee.
[*Duchâtel approaches a few steps nearer, and tries to read the countenance of the* DUKE.
BURGUNDY. What makest thou
Of me, Johanna? Know'st thou what thou askest?
JOHAN. A gracious sovereign throws his portals wide,
Admitting every guest, excluding none;
As freely as the firmament the world,
So mercy must encircle friend and foe.
Impartially the sun pours forth his beams
Through all the regions of infinity;
The heaven's reviving dew falls every where,
And brings refreshment to each thirsty plant;
Whate'er is good, and cometh from on high,
Is universal, and without reserve;
But in the heart's recesses darkness dwells!
BURG. . Oh, she can mould me to her wish; my heart
Is in her forming hand like melted wax.
—Duchâtel, I forgive thee—come, embrace me!
Shade of my sire! oh, not with wrathful eye
Behold me clasp the hand that shed thy blood.
Ye death-gods, reckon not to my account,
That my dread oath of vengeance I abjure.
With you, in yon drear realm of endless night,
There beats no human heart, and all remains
Eternal, stedfast, and immoveable.
Here in the light of day 'tis otherwise.
Man, living feeling man, is aye the sport
Of the o'ermast'ring present.
CHARLES (*to* JOHANNA). Lofty maid!
What owe I not to thee! How truly now
Hast thou fulfill'd thy word,—how rapidly
Reversed my destiny! Thou hast appeased
My friends, and in the dust o'erwhelm'd my foes;

From foreign yoke redeem'd my cities.—Thou
Hast all achieved.—Speak, how can I reward thee?

JOHAN. Sire, in prosperity be still humane,
As in misfortune thou hast ever been;
—And on the height of greatness ne'er forget
The value of a friend in times of need;
Thou hast approved it in adversity.
Refuse not to the lowest of thy people
The claims of justice and humanity,
For thy deliv'rer from the fold was call'd.
Beneath thy royal sceptre, thou shalt gather
The realm entire of France. Thou shalt become
The root and ancestor of mighty kings;
Succeeding monarchs, in their regal state,
Shall those outshine, who fill'd the throne before
Thy stock, in majesty shall bloom so long
As it stands rooted in the people's love.
Pride only can achieve its overthrow,
And from the lowly station, whence to-day
God summon'd thy deliv'rer, ruin dire
Obscurely threats thy crime-polluted sons!

BURG. Exalted maid! Possessed with sacred fire!
If thou canst look into the gulf of time,
Speak also of my race! Shall coming years
With ampler honours crown my princely line?

JOHAN. High as the throne, thou, Burgundy, hast built
Thy seat of power, and thy aspiring heart
Would raise still higher, even to the clouds,
The lofty edifice.—But from on high
A hand omnipotent shall check its rise.
Fear thou not hence the downfall of thy house!
Its glory in a maiden shall survive;
Upon her breast shall sceptre-bearing kings,
The people's shepherds, bloom. Their ample sway
Shall o'er two realms extend, they shall ordain
Laws to control the known world, and the new,
Which God still veils behind the pathless waves.

CHAS. . O, if the Spirit doth reveal it, speak;
Shall this alliance which we now renew
In distant ages still unite our sons?

JOHANNA (*after a pause*).
Sovereigns and kings! dissunion shun with dread!
Wake not contention from the murky cave
Where he doth lie asleep, for once aroused
He cannot soon be quell'd! He doth beget
An iron brood, a ruthless progeny;
Wildly the sweeping conflagration spreads.
—Be satisfied! Seek not to question further!
In the glad present let your hearts rejoice,
The future let me shroud!

SOREL. Exalted maid!
Thou canst explore my heart, thou readest there
If after worldly greatness it aspires,
To me too give a joyous oracle.

JOHAN. Of empires only I discern the doom;
In thine own bosom lies thy destiny!

DUNOIS. What, holy maid, will be thy destiny?
Doubtless, for thee, who art belov'd of Heaven,
The fairest earthly happiness shall bloom,
For thou art pure and holy.

JOHANNA. Happiness
Abideth yonder, with our God, in Heaven.

CHAS. Thy fortune be henceforth thy Monarch's care!
For I will glorify thy name in France,
And the remotest age shall call thee blest.
Thus I fulfil my word.—Kneel down!
[*He draws his sword and touches her with it.*
And rise
A noble! I, thy Monarch, from the dust
Of thy mean birth exalt thee.—In the grave
Thy fathers I ennoble—thou shalt bear
Upon thy shield the fleur-de-lis, and be
Of equal lineage with the best in France.
Only the royal blood of Valois shall
Be nobler than thine own! The highest peer
Shall feel himself exalted by thy hand;
To wed thee nobly, maid, shall be my care.

DUNOIS (*advancing*).
My heart made choice of her when she was lowly:
The recent honour which encircles her,
Neither exalts her merit, nor my love.

Here in my sovereign's presence, and before
This holy bishop, maid, I tender thee
My hand, and take thee as my princely wife,
If thou esteem me worthy to be thine.

CHAS. . Resistless maiden! wonder thou dost add
To wonder! Yes, I now believe that nought's
Impossible to thee. Thou hast subdued
This haughty heart, which still hath scoff'd till now,
At Love's omnipotence.

LA HIRE (*advancing*). If I have read
Aright Johanna's soul, her modest heart's
Her fairest jewel.—She deserveth well
The homage of the great, but her desires
Soar not so high.—She striveth not to reach
A giddy eminence; an honest heart's
True love contents her, and the quiet lot
Which with this hand I humbly proffer her.

CHAS. . Thou too, La Hire! two brave competitors,—
Peers in heroic virtue and renown!
—Wilt thou, who hast appeased mine enemies,
My realms united, part my dearest friends?
One only can possess her; I esteem
Each to be justly worthy such a prize.
Speak, maid! thy heart alone must here decide.

SOREL. The noble maiden is surprised, her cheek
Is crimson'd over with a modest blush.
Let her have leisure to consult her heart,
And in confiding friendship to unseal
Her long-closed bosom. Now the hour is come
When, with a sister's love, I also may
Approach the maid severe, and offer her
This silent faithful breast.—Permit us women
Alone to weigh this womanly affair;
Do you await the issue.

CHARLES (*about to retire*). Be it so!

JOHAN. No, Sire, not so! the crimson on my cheek
Is not the blush of bashful modesty.
Nought have I for this noble lady's ear
Which in this presence I may not proclaim.
The choice of these brave knights much honours me,
But I did not forsake my shepherd-walks,

To chase vain worldly splendour, nor array
My tender frame in panoply of war,
To twine the bridal garland in my hair.
Far other labour is assign'd to me,
Which a pure maiden can alone achieve
I am the soldier of the Lord of Hosts,
And to no mortal man can I be wife.

ARCHB. To be a fond companion unto man
Is woman born—when nature she obeys,
Most wisely she fulfils high Heaven's decree!
When his behest who call'd thee to the field
Shall be accomplish'd, thou'lt resign thine arms,
And once again rejoin the softer sex,
Whose gentle nature thou dost now forego,
And which from war's stern duties is exempt.

JOHAN Most reverend Sir! as yet I cannot say
What work the Spirit will enjoin on me.
But when the time comes round, his guiding voice
Will not be mute, and it I will obey.
Now he commands me to complete my task,
My royal Master's brow is still uncrown'd,
Still unanointed is his sacred head;
My Sovereign cannot yet be call'd a king.

CHAS. . We are advancing on the way to Rheims.

JOHAN. Let us not linger, for the enemy
Is planning how to intercept thy course:
I will conduct thee through the midst of them!

DUNOIS. And when thy holy mission is fulfill'd,
When we in triumph shall have enter'd Rheims,
Wilt thou not then permit me, sacred maid—

JOHAN. If Heaven ordain that, from the strife of death,
Crown'd with the wreath of conquest, I return,
My task will be accomplish'd—and the maid
Hath, thenceforth, in the palace nought to do.

CHARLES (*taking her hand*).
It is the Spirit's voice impels thee now;
Love in thy bosom, Heaven-inspir'd, is mute;
'Twill not be ever so; believe me, maid!
Our weapons will repose, and victory
Will by the hand lead forward gentle peace;

Joy will return again to every breast,
And softer feelings wake in every heart,—
They will awaken also in thy breast.
And tears of gentle longing thou wilt weep,
Such as thine eye hath never shed before;
—This heart, which Heaven now occupies alone,
Will fondly open to an earthly friend—
Thousands thou hast till now redeem'd and bless'd,
Thou wilt at length conclude by blessing one!

JOHAN. Art weary, Dauphin, of the heavenly vision,
That thou its vessel wouldst annihilate?
The holy maiden, sent to thee by God,
Degrade, reducing her to common dust?
Ye blind of heart! O ye of little faith!
God's glory shines around you; to your gaze
He doth reveal his wonders, and ye see
Nought but a woman in me. Dare a woman
In iron panoply array herself,
And boldly mingle in the strife of men?
Wo, wo is me! if e'er my hand should wield
The avenging sword of God, and my vain heart
Cherish affection to a mortal man!
'Twere better for me I had ne'er been born!
Henceforth no more of this, unless ye would
Provoke the Spirit's wrath who in me dwells!
The eye of man, regarding me with love,
To me is horror and profanity.

CHAS. Forbear! It is in vain to urge her further.

JOHAN. Command the trumpets of the war to sound!
This stillness doth perplex and harass me;
An inward impulse drives me from repose,
It still impels me to achieve my work,
And sternly beckons me to meet my doom.

SCENE V.

A Knight, entering hastily.

CHAS. What tidings? Speak!

KNIGHT. The foe has cross'd the Marne,
And marshalleth his army for the fight.

JOHANNA (*inspired*).

Battle and tumult! Now my soul is free.
Arm, warriors, arm! while I prepare the troops.
[*She goes out.*

CHAS. . Follow, La Hire! E'en at the gates of Rheims
They will compel us to dispute the crown!

DUNOIS. No genuine courage prompts them. This essay
Is the last effort of enraged despair.

CHAS. . I do not urge you, Duke. To-day's the time
To compensate the errors of the past.

BURG. . You shall be satisfied with me.

CHARLES. Myself
Will march before you on the path of fame;
Here, with my royal town of Rheims in view,
I'll fight, and gallantly achieve the crown.
Thy knight, my Agnes, bids thee now farewell!

AGNES (*embracing him*).

I do not weep, I do not tremble for thee;
My faith, unshaken, cleaveth unto God!
Heaven, were we doom'd to failure, had not given
So many gracious pledges of success!
My heart doth whisper me that, victory-crown'd,
In conquer'd Rheims, I shall embrace my King.

[*Trumpets sound with a spirited tone, and while the scene is changing, pass into a wild martial strain. When the scene opens, the orchestra joins in, accompanied by warlike instruments behind the scene.*

SCENE VI.

The Scene changes to an open country, skirted with trees. During the music, Soldiers are seen retreating hastily across the back-ground.

TALBOT, *leaning on* FASTOLFE, *and accompanied by Soldiers. Soon after,* LIONEL.

TALBOT. Here lay me down, beneath these trees, and then
Betake you back, with speed, unto the fight;
I need no aid to die.

FASTOLFE. Oh woful day! [LIONEL *enters.*
Behold what sight awaits you, Lionel!

Here lies our General, wounded unto death.

LIONEL. Now, God forbid! My noble Lord, arise!
No moment this to falter and to sink.
Yield not to death. By your all-powerful will,
Command your ebbing spirit still to live.

TALBOT. In vain! The day of destiny is come,
Which will o'erthrow the English power in France.
In desperate combat I have vainly risk'd
The remnant of our force to ward it off.
Struck by the thunderbolt I prostrate lie,
Never to rise again.—Rheims now is lost,
Hasten to succour Paris!

LIONEL. Paris is with the Dauphin reconcil'd;
A courier even now hath brought the news.

TALBOT (*tearing off his bandages*).
Then freely flow, ye currents of my blood,
For Talbot now is weary of the sun!

LIONEL. I may no longer tarry: Fastolfe, haste!
Convey our leader to a place of safety.
No longer now can we maintain this post;
Our flying troops disperse on every side,
On, with resistless might, the Maiden comes.

TALBOT. Folly, thou conquerest, and I must yield!
Against stupidity the very gods
Themselves contend in vain. Exalted reason,
Resplendent daughter of the head divine,
Wise foundress of the system of the world,
Guide of the stars, who art thou then, if thou,
Bound to the tail of folly's uncurb'd steed,
Must, vainly shrieking, with the drunken crowd,
Eyes open, plunge down headlong in the abyss.
Accurs'd, who striveth after noble ends,
And with deliberate wisdom forms his plans!
To the fool-king belongs the world—

LIONEL. My Lord,
But for a few brief moments can you live—
Think of your Maker!

TALBOT. Had we, like brave men,
Been vanquished by the brave, we might, indeed,
Console ourselves that 'twas the common lot;
For fickle fortune aye revolves her wheel.

But to be baffled by such juggling arts!
Deserv'd our earnest and laborious life
Not a more earnest issue?

LIONEL (*extends his hand to him*). Fare you well!
The debt of honest tears I will discharge
After the battle—if I then survive.
Now Fate doth call me hence, where on the field
Her web she weaveth, and dispenseth doom.
We in another world shall meet again;
For our long friendship, this a brief farewell. [*Exit.*

TALBOT. Soon is the struggle past, and to the earth,
To the eternal sun, I render back
These atoms, join'd in me for pain and pleasure
And of the mighty Talbot, who the world
Fill'd with his martial glory, there remains
Nought save a modicum of senseless dust.
—Such is the end of man!—the only spoil
We carry with us from life's battle-field,
Is but an insight into nothingness,
And utter scorn of all which once appear'd
To us exalted and desirable.—

SCENE VII

CHARLES, BURGUNDY, DUNOIS, DU CHATEL, *and Soldiers*

BURG.. The trench is storm'd!
DUNOIS. The victory is ours!
CHARLES (*perceiving* TALBOT).
Look! Who is he, who yonder of the sun
Taketh reluctant, sorrowful farewell?
His armour indicates no common man;
Go, succour him, if aid may yet avail.
[*Soldiers of the* KING'S *retinue step forward.*

FASTOL. Back! Stand apart! Respect the mighty dead,
Whom ye, in life, ne'er ventur'd to approach!

BURG.. What do I see? Lord Talbot in his blood!
[*He approaches him.* TALBOT *gazes fixedly at him, and dies.*

FASTOL. Traitor avaunt! Let not the sight of thee
Poison the dying hero's parting glance.

DUNOIS. Resistless hero! Dread-inspiring Talbot!
Does such a narrow space suffice thee now,

And this vast kingdom could not satisfy
The large ambition of thy giant soul!
—Now first I can salute you, Sire, as King:
The diadem but totter'd on your brow,
While yet a spirit tenanted this clay.

CHARLES (*after contemplating the body in silence*).
A higher power hath vanquish'd him, not we!
He lies upon the soil of France, as lies
The hero on the shield he would not quit.
Well, peace be with his ashes! Bear him hence!
[*Soldiers take up the body and carry it away.*
Here, in the heart of France, where his career
Of conquest ended, let his reliques lie!
So far no hostile sword attain'd before.
A fitting tomb shall memorize his name;
His epitaph the spot whereon he fell.

FASTOLFE (*yielding his sword*).
I am your prisoner, Sir.

CHARLES (*returning his sword*). Not so! Rude war
Respects each pious office; you are free
To render the last honours to the dead.
Go now, Du Châtel,—still my Agnes trembles—
Hasten to snatch her from anxiety—
Bring her the tidings of our victory,
And usher her in triumph into Rheims!
[*Exit* DU CHATEL.

SCENE VIII.

The same. LA HIRE.

DUNOIS. La Hire, where is the Maiden?

LA HIRE. That I ask
Of you; I left her fighting by your side.

DUNOIS. I thought she was protected by your arm,
When I departed to assist the King.

BURG.. Not long ago I saw her banner wave
Amid the thickest of the hostile ranks.

DUNOIS. Alas! where is she? Evil I forebode!
Come, let us haste to rescue her.—I fear
Her daring soul hath led her on too far;
Alone, she combats in the midst of foes,
And without succour yieldeth to the crowd.

CHAS. . Haste to her rescue!
LA HIRE. Come!
BURGUNDY. We follow all! [*Exit.*
[*They retire in haste.*

A deserted part of the battle-field. In the distance are seen the towers of Rheims illumined by the sun.

SCENE IX.

A KNIGHT *in black armour, with closed visor.* JOHANNA *follows him to the front of the stage, where he stops and awaits her.*

JOHAN. Deluder! now I see thy stratagem!
Thou hast deceitfully, through seeming flight,
Allur'd me from the battle, doom and death
Averting thus from many a British head.
Destruction now doth overtake thyself.
KNIGHT. Why dost thou follow after me and track
My steps with quenchless rage? I am not doom'd
To perish by thy hand.
JOHANNA. Deep in my soul
I hate thee as the night, which is thy colour.
To blot thee out from the fair light of day
An irresistible desire impels me.
Who art thou? Raise thy visor.—I had said
That thou wert Talbot, had I not myself
Seen warlike Talbot in the battle fall.
KNIGHT. Is the divining Spirit mute in thee?
JOHAN. His voice speaks loudly in my spirit's depths
The near approach of wo.
BLACK KNIGHT. Johanna D'Arc!
Borne on the wings of conquest, thou hast reach'd
The gates of Rheims. Let thy achiev'd renown
Content thee. Fortune, like thy slave, till now
Hath follow'd thee; dismiss her, ere in wrath
She free herself; fidelity she hates;
She serveth none with constancy till death.
JOHAN. Why check me in the midst of my career?
Why bid me falter and forsake my work?
I will complete it, and fulfil my vow!
KNIGHT. Nothing can thee, thou mighty one, withstand,

In battle thou art aye invincible.
—But henceforth shun the fight; attend my warning!

JOHAN. Not from my hand will I resign this sword
Till haughty England's prostrate in the dust.

KNIGHT. Behold! there Rheims ariseth with its towers,
The goal and end of thy career.— Thou seest
The lofty minster's sun-illumin'd dome;
Thou in triumphal pomp wouldst enter there,
Thy Monarch crown, and ratify thy vow.
—Enter not there! Return! Attend my warning!

JOHAN. What art thou, double-tongue'd, deceitful being,
Who wouldst bewilder and appal me? Speak!
By what authority dost thou presume
To greet me with fallacious oracles?
[*The* BLACK KNIGHT *is about to depart, she steps in his way.*
No, thou shalt speak, or perish by my hand!
[*She endeavours to strike him.*

BLACK KNIGHT (*touches her with his hand, she remains motionless*).
Slay, what is mortal!
[*Darkness, thunder and lightning. The* KNIGHT *sinks into the earth.*

JOHANNA (*stands at first in amazement, but soon recovers herself*).
'Twas nothing living. 'Twas a base delusion,
An instrument of Hell, a juggling fiend,
Uprisen hither from the fiery pool
To shake and terrify my stedfast heart.
Wielding the sword of God, whom should I fear?
I will triumphantly achieve my work.
My courage should not waver, should not fail,
Were Hell itself to champion me to fight!
[*She is about to depart.*

SCENE X.

LIONEL, JOHANNA.

LIONEL. Accursed one, prepare thee for the fight!
—Not both of us shall quit this field alive.
Thou hast destroy'd the bravest of our host:

The noble Talbot hath his mighty soul
Breathed forth upon my bosom.—I'll avenge
The hero, or participate his doom.
And wouldst thou know who brings thee glory now,
Whether he live or die,—I'm Lionel,
The sole survivor of the English chiefs,
And still unconquer'd is this valiant arm.

[*He rushes upon her; after a short combat she strikes the sword out of his hand.*

Perfidious fortune!

[*He wrestles with her.* JOHANNA *seizes him by the crest and tears open his helmet; his face is thus exposed; at the same time she draws her sword with her right hand.*

JOHANNA. Suffer what thou soughtest!
The Virgin sacrifices thee through me!

[*At this moment she gazes in his face. His aspect softens her, she remains motionless and slowly lets her arm sink.*

LIONEL. Why linger, why withhold the stroke of death?
My glory thou hast taken—take my life!
I want no mercy, I am in thy power.

[*She makes him a sign with her hand to fly.*

How! shall I fly, and owe my life to thee?
No, I would rather die!

JOHANNA (*with averted face*). I will not know
That ever thou didst owe thy life to me.

LIONEL. I hate alike thee and thy proffer'd gift.
I want no mercy—kill thine enemy,
Who loathes and would have slain thee.

JOHANNA. Slay me then,
And fly!

LIONEL. Ha! What is this?

JOHANNA (*hiding her face*). Wo's me!

LIONEL (*approaching her*). 'Tis said
Thou killest all the English, whom thy sword
Subdues in battle—why spare me alone?

JOHANNA (*raises her sword with a rapid movement, as if to strike him, but lets it fall quickly when she gazes on his face*).
O Holy Virgin!

LIONEL. Wherefore namest thou
The Holy Virgin? she knows nought of thee;
Heaven hath no part in thee.
JOHANNA (*in the greatest anxiety*). What have I done!
Alas! I've broke my vow!
[*She wrings her hands in despair.*
LIONEL (*looks at her with sympathy and approaches her*).
Unhappy Maid!
I pity thee! Thy sorrow touches me;
Thou hast shown mercy unto me alone,
My hatred yielded unto sympathy!
—Who art thou, and whence comest thou?
JOHANNA. Away!
LIONEL. Thy youth, thy beauty, move my soul to pity!
Thy look sinks in my heart. I fain would save thee--
How may I do so? tell me. Come! oh come!
Renounce this fearful league—throw down these arms!
JOHAN. I am unworthy now to carry them!
LIONEL. Then throw them from thee—quick! come follow me!
JOHANNA (*with horror*).
How! follow thee!
LIONEL. Thou mayst be saved Oh come!
I will deliver thee, but linger not.
Strange sorrow for thy sake doth seize my heart,
Unspeakable desire to rescue thee—
[*He seizes her arm.*
JOHAN. The Bastard comes! 'Tis they! They seek for me!
If they should find thee—
LIONEL. I'll defend thee, Maid!
JOHAN. I die if thou shouldst perish by their hands!
LIONEL. Am I then dear to thee?
JOHANNA. Ye heavenly Powers!
LIONEL. Shall I again behold thee—hear from thee?
JOHAN. No! never!
LIONEL. Thus this sword I seize, in pledge
That I again behold thee!
[*He snatches her sword.*
JOHANNA. Madman, hold!
Thou darest?
LIONEL. Now I yield to force—again
I'll see thee! [*He retires*

Scene XI.

Johanna, Dunois, La Hire.

La Hire. It is she! The Maiden lives!
Dunois. Fear not, Johanna! friends are at thy side.
Hire. . Is not that Lionel who yonder flies?
Dunois. Let him escape! Maiden, the righteous cause
Hath triumph'd now. Rheims opens wide its gates;
The joyous crowds pour forth to meet their King.—
Hire. What ails the Maiden? She grows pale—she sinks!
[Johanna *grows dizzy, and is about to fall.*
Dunois. She's wounded—rend her breastplate—'tis her arm!
The wound is not severe.
La Hire. Her blood doth flow.
Johan. Oh that my life would stream forth with my blood!
[*She lies senseless in* La Hire's *arms*

ACT IV.

A hall adorned as for a festival; the columns are hung with garlands; behind the scene flutes and hautboys.

Scene I.

Johan. Hushed in the din of arms, war's storms subside,
Glad song and dance succeed the bloody fray,
Through all the streets joy echoes far and wide,
Altar and church are deck'd in rich array,
Triumphal arches rise in vernal pride,
Wreaths round the columns wind their flowery way,
Wide Rheims cannot contain the mighty throng,
Which to the joyous pageant rolls along.

One thought alone doth every heart possess,
One rapt'rous feeling o'er each breast preside.
And those to-day are link'd in happiness

Whom bloody hatred did erewhile divide.
All who themselves of Gallic race confess
The name of Frenchman own with conscious pride,
France sees the splendour of her ancient crown,
And to her Monarch's son bows humbly down.

Yet I, the author of this wide delight,
The joy, myself created, cannot share;
My heart is chang'd, in sad and dreary plight
It flies the festive pageant in despair;
Still to the British camp it taketh flight,
Against my will my gaze still wanders there,
And from the throng I steal, with grief oppress'd,
To hide the guilt which weighs upon my breast.

What! I permit a human form
To haunt my bosom's sacred cell?
And there, where heavenly radiance shone,
Doth earthly love presume to dwell?
The saviour of my country, I,
The warrior of God most high,
Burn for my country's foeman? Dare I name
Heaven's holy light, nor feel o'erwhelm'd with shame?

[*The music behind the scene passes into a soft and moving melody.*

Wo is me! Those melting tones!
They distract my 'wilder'd brain!
Every note, his voice recalling,
Conjures up his form again!

Would that spears were whizzing round!
Would that battle's thunder roar'd!
'Midst the wild tumultuous sound
My former strength were then restored.

These sweet tones, these melting voices,
With seductive power are fraught!
They dissolve, in gentle longing,
Every feeling, every thought,
Waking tears of plaintive sadness!

[*After a pause, with more energy.*
Should I have kill'd him? Could I, when I gazed
Upon his face? Kill'd him? Oh, rather far
Would I have turn'd my weapon 'gainst myself!
And am I culpable because humane?
Is pity sinful?—Pity! Didst thou hear
The voice of pity and humanity,
When others fell the victims of thy sword?
Why was she silent when the gentle youth
From Wales, entreated thee to spare his life?
O, cunning heart! Thou liest before high Heaven;
It is not pity's voice impels thee now!
—Why was I doom'd to look into his eyes!
To mark his noble features! With that glance,
Thy crime, thy wo commenc'd. Unhappy one!
A sightless instrument thy God demands,
Blindly thou must accomplish his behest!
When thou didst see, God's shield abandon'd thee,
And the dire snares of Hell around thee press'd!
[*Flutes are again heard, and she subsides into a quiet melancholy.*

Harmless staff! Oh, that I ne'er
Had for the sword abandon'd thee!
Had voices never reached mine ear,
From thy branches, sacred tree!
High Queen of Heaven! Oh would that thou
Hadst ne'er reveal'd thyself to me!
Take back—I dare not claim it now—
Take back thy crown, 'tis not for me!

I saw the heavens open wide,
I gazed upon that face of love!
Yet here on earth my hopes abide,
They do not dwell in heaven above!
Why, Holy One, on me impose
This dread vocation? Could I steel,
And to each soft emotion close
This heart, by nature form'd to feel?

Wouldst thou proclaim thy high command,
Make choice of those who, free from sin,

In thy eternal mansions stand;
Send forth thy flaming cherubim!
Immortal ones, thy law they keep,
They do not feel, they do not weep!
Choose not a tender woman's aid,
Not the frail soul of shepherd maid!

Was I concern'd with warlike things,
With battles or the strife of kings?
In innocence I led my sheep
Adown the mountain's silent steep.
But thou didst send me into life,
'Midst princely halls and scenes of strife,
To lose my spirit's tender bloom:
Alas, I did not seek my doom!

Scene II.

Agnes Sorel, Johanna.

Sorel (*advances joyfully. When she perceives* Johanna, *she hastens to her and falls upon her neck; then suddenly recollecting herself, she relinquishes her hold, and falls down before her*).

No! no! not so! Before thee in the dust—

Johanna (*trying to raise her*).

Arise! Thou dost forget thyself and me.

Sorel. Forbid me not! 'tis the excess of joy
Which throws me at thy feet—I must pour forth
My o'ercharged heart in gratitude to God;
I worship the Invisible in thee.
Thou art the angel, who hast led my Lord
To Rheims, to crown him with the royal crown.
What I ne'er dream'd to see, is realized!
The coronation-march will soon set forth;
Array'd in festal pomp, the Monarch stands;
Assembled are the nobles of the realm,
The mighty peers, to bear the insignia;
To the cathedral rolls the billowy crowd;
Glad songs resound, the bells unite their peal;
Oh, this excess of joy I cannot bear!

[Johanna *gently raises her.* Agnes Sorel *pauses a moment, and surveys the* Maiden *more narrowly.*

Yet thou remainest ever grave and stern;
Thou canst create delight, yet share it not.
Thy heart is cold, thou feelest not our joy,
Thou hast beheld the glories of the skies;
No earthly interest moveth thy pure breast.

[JOHANNA *seizes her hand passionately, but soon lets it fall again.*

Oh, couldst thou own a woman's feeling heart!
Put off this armour, war is over now,
Confess thy union with the softer sex!
My loving heart shrinks timidly from thee,
While thus thou wearest Pallas' brow severe

JOHAN. What wouldst thou have me do?

SOREL. Unarm thyself!
Put off this coat of mail! The God of Love
Fears to approach a bosom clad in steel.
Oh, be a woman, thou wilt feel his power!

JOHAN. What, now unarm myself? 'Midst battle's roar
I 'll bare my bosom to the stroke of death!
Not now!—Would that a sevenfold wall of brass
Could hide me from your revels, from myself!

SOREL. Thou 'rt loved by Count Dunois. His noble heart,
Which virtue and renown alone inspire,
With pure and holy passion glows for thee
Oh, it is sweet to know oneself belov'd
By such a hero—sweeter still to love him!

[JOHANNA *turns away with aversion.*

Thou hatest him?—no, no, thou only canst
Not love him:—how could hatred stir thy breast!
Those who would tear us from the one we love,
We hate alone; but none can claim thy love.
Thy heart is tranquil—if it could but feel—

JOHAN. Oh, pity me! Lament my hapless fate!

SOREL. What can be wanting to complete thy joy?
Thou hast fulfill'd thy promise, France is free,
To Rheims, in triumph, thou hast led the King,
Thy mighty deeds have gain'd thee high renown,
A happy people praise and worship thee;
Thy name, the honour'd theme of every tongue;
Thou art the goddess of this festival;

The Monarch, with his crown and regal state,
Shines not with greater majesty than thou!

JOHAN. Oh, could I hide me in the depths of earth!

SOREL. Why this emotion? Whence this strange distress?
Who may to-day look up without a fear,
If thou dost cast thine eyes upon the ground!
It is for me to blush, me, who near thee
Feel all my littleness; I cannot reach
Thy lofty virtue, thy heroic strength!
For—all my weakness shall I own to thee?
Not the renown of France, my Fatherland,
Not the new splendour of the Monarch's crown,
Not the triumphant gladness of the crowds,
Engage this woman's heart. One only form
Is in its depths enshrin'd; it hath not room
For any feeling save for one alone:
He is the idol, him the people bless,
Him they extol, for him they strew these flowers,
And he is mine, he is my own true love!

JOHAN. Oh, thou art happy! thou art bless'd indeed!
Thou lovest, where all love. Thou mayst, unblamed,
Pour forth thy rapture, and thine inmost heart
Fearless discover to the gaze of man!
Thy country's triumph is thy lover's too.
The vast, innumerable multitudes,
Who, rolling onward, crowd within these walls,
Participate thy joy, they hallow it;
Thee they salute, for thee they twine the wreath,
Thou art a portion of the general joy;
Thou lovest the all-inspiring soul, the sun,
And what thou seest is thy lover's glory!

SOREL (*falling on her neck*).
Thou dost delight me, thou canst read my heart!
I did thee wrong, thou knowest what love is,
Thou tell'st my feelings with a voice of power.
My heart forgets its fear and its reserve,
And seeks confidingly to blend with thine—

JOHANNA (*tearing herself from her with violence*).
Forsake me! Turn away! Do not pollute
Thyself by longer intercourse with me!

Be happy! go—and in the deepest night
Leave me to hide my infamy, my wo!

SOREL. Thou frighten'st me, I understand thee not,
I ne'er have understood thee—for from me
Thy dark mysterious being still was veil'd.
Who may divine what thus disturbs thy heart,
Thus terrifies thy pure and sacred soul!

JOHAN. Thou art the pure, the holy one! Couldst thou
Behold mine inmost heart, thou, shuddering,
Wouldst fly the traitoress, the enemy!

SCENE III.

DUNOIS, DUCHATEL, *and* LA HIRE, *with the Banner of* JOHANNA.

DUNOIS. Johanna, thee we seek. All is prepared;
The King hath sent us, 'tis his royal will
That thou before him shouldst thy banner bear·
The company of princes thou shalt join,
And march immediately before the King:
For he doth not deny it, and the world
Shall witness, Maiden, that to thee alone
He doth ascribe the honour of this day.

HIRE. Here is the banner. Take it, noble Maiden!
Thou 'rt stayed for by the princes and the people.

JOHAN. I march before him? I the banner bear?

DUNOIS. Whom else would it become! What other hand
Is pure enough to bear the sacred ensign!
Amid the battle thou hast waved it oft;
To grace our glad procession bear it now.

[LA HIRE *presents the banner to her, she draws back, shuddering.*

JOHAN. Away! away!

LA HIRE. How! Art thou terrified
At thine own banner, Maiden?—Look at it!

[*He displays the banner.*

It is the same, thou didst in conquest wave.
Imaged upon it is the Queen of Heaven,
Floating in glory o'er this earthly ball;
For so the Holy Mother show'd it thee.

[JOHANNA, *gazing upon it with horror*

'Tis she herself! so she appear'd to me.
See, how she looks at me and knits her brow,
And anger flashes from her threatening eye!

SOREL. Alas, she raveth! Maiden, be composed!
Collect thyself! Thou seest nothing real!
That is her pictured image; she herself
Wanders above, amid the angelic quire!

JOHAN. Thou comest, fearful one, to punish me?
Destroy, o'erwhelm, thine arrowy lightnings hurl
And let them fall upon my guilty head.
Alas, my vow I've broken! I've profaned
And desecrated thy most holy name!

DUNOIS. Wo 's us! What may this mean? What unblest words?

LA HIRE (*in astonishment, to* DUCHATEL).
This strange emotion canst thou comprehend?

DUCHAT. That which I see, I see—I long have fear'd it.

DUNOIS. What sayest thou?

DUCHATEL. I dare not speak my thoughts.
I would to Heaven that the King were crown'd!

HIRE. How! hath the awe this banner doth inspire
Turn'd back upon thyself? before this sign
Let Britons tremble; to the foes of France
'Tis fearful, but to all true citizens
It is auspicious.

JOHANNA. Yes, thou sayest truly!
To friends 'tis gracious! but to enemies
It causeth horror!

[*The Coronation march is heard.*

DUNOIS. Take thy banner, then!
The march begins—no time is to be lost!

[*They press the banner upon her; she seizes it with evident emotion, and retires; the others follow.*

[*The scene changes to an open place before the Cathedral.*

SCENE IV.

Spectators occupy the background; BERTRAND, CLAUDE MARIE *and* ETIENNE *come forward; then* MARGOT *and* LOUISON *The Coronation march is heard in the distance.*

BERT. . Hark to the music! They approach already!
What had we better do? Shall we mount up

Upon the platform, or press through the crowd,
That we may nothing lose of the procession?

ETIEN. It is not to be thought of. All the streets
Are throng'd with horsemen and with carriages.
Beside these houses let us take our stand.
Here we without annoyance may behold
The train as it goes by.

CLAUDE MARIE. Almost it seems
As were the half of France assembled here;
So mighty is the flood that it hath reached
Even our distant Lotharingian land
And borne us hither!

BERTRAND. Who would sit at home
When great events are stirring in the land!
It hath cost plenty, both of sweat and blood,
Ere the crown rested on its rightful head!
Nor shall our lawful King, to whom we give
The crown, be worse accompanied than he
Whom the Parisians in St. Denis crown'd!
He is no loyal honest-minded man
Who doth absent him from this festival,
And joins not in the cry: "God save the King!"

SCENE V.

MARGOT *and* LOUISON *join them.*

LOUIS. We shall again behold our sister, Margot!
How my heart beats!

MARGOT. In majesty and pomp
We shall behold her, saying to ourselves:
It is our sister, it is our Johanna!

LOUIS. Till I have seen her, I can scarce believe
That she, whom men the Maid of Orleans name,
The mighty warrior, is indeed Johanna,
Our sister whom we lost!

[*The music draws nearer*

MARGOT. Thou doubtest still!
Thou wilt thyself behold her!

BERTRAND. See, they come!

Scene VI.

[*Musicians, with flutes and hautboys, open the procession. Children follow, dressed in white, with branches in their hands; behind them two heralds. Then a procession of halberdiers, followed by magistrates in their robes. Then two marshals with their staves; the* Duke *of* Burgundy, *bearing the sword;* Dunois *with the sceptre, other nobles with the regalia; others with sacrificial offerings. Behind these,* Knights *with the ornaments of their order; choristers with incense; two* Bishops *with the ampulla; the* Archbisop *with the crucifix.* Johanna *follows, with her banner, she walks with downcast head and wavering steps; her sisters, on beholding her, express their astonishment and joy. Behind her comes the* King *under a canopy, supported by four barons; courtiers follow, soldiers conclude the procession; as soon as it has entered the church the music ceases.*

Scene VII.

Louison, Margot, Claude Marie, Etienne, Bertrand.

Marg. Saw you our sister?
Claude Marie. She in golden armour,
Who with the banner walked before the King?
Marg. It was Johanna. It was she, our sister!
Louis. She recognised us not! She did not feel
That we, her sisters, were so near to her.
She look'd upon the ground, and seemed so pale,
And trembled so beneath her banner's weight—
When I beheld her, I could not rejoice.
Marg. So now, arrayed in splendour and in pomp,
I have beheld our sister—Who in dreams
Would ever have imagined or conceiv'd,
When on our native hills she drove the flock,
That we should see her in such majesty?
Louis. Our father's dream is realized, that we
In Rheims before our sister should bow down.
That is the church, which in his dream he saw,
And each particular is now fulfilled.

But images of wo he also saw!
Alas! I'm griev'd to see her raised so high!

BERT. . Why stand we idly here? Let 's to the church
To view the coronation!

MARGOT. Yes! Perchance
We there may meet our sister; let us go!

LOUIS. . We have beheld her. Let us now return
Back to our village.

MARGOT. How? Ere we with her
Have interchanged a word?

LOUISON. She doth belong
To us no longer; she with princes stands
And monarchs.—Who are we, that we should seek
With foolish vanity to near her state?
She was a stranger, while she dwelt with us!

MARG. . Will she despise, and treat us with contempt?

BERT. . The King himself is not ashamed of us,
He kindly greets the meanest of the crowd.
How high so ever she may be exalted,
The King is raised still higher!

[*Trumpets and kettle-drums are heard from the church.*

CLAUDE MARIE. Let 's to the church!

[*They hasten to the background, where they are lost among the crowd.*

SCENE VIII.

THIBAUT *enters, clad in black.* RAIMOND *follows him, and tries to hold him back.*

RAIM. . Stay, father Thibaut! Do not join the crowds!
Here, at this joyous festival you meet
None but the happy, whom your grief offends.
Come! Let us quit the town with hasty steps.

THIB. . Hast thou beheld my child? My wretched child?
Didst thou observe her?

RAIMOND. I entreat you, fly!

THIB. . Didst mark her tottering and uncertain steps,
Her countenance, so pallid and disturb'd?
She feels her dreadful state; the hour is come
To save my child, and I will not neglect it.

[*He is about to retire.*

RAIM. What would you do?
THIBAUT. Surprise her, hurl her down
From her vain happiness, and forcibly
Restore her to the God whom she denies.
RAIM. O do not work the ruin of your child!
THIB. If her soul lives, her mortal part may die.
[JOHANNA *rushes out of the church, without her banner. The people press around her, worship her, and kiss her garments. She is detained in the background by the crowd.*
She comes! 'tis she! She rushes from the church.
Her troubled conscience drives her from the fane!
'Tis visibly the judgment of her God!
RAIM. Farewell! Require not my attendance further!
Hopeful I came, and sorrowful depart.
Your daughter once again I have beheld,
And feel again that she is lost to me!
[*He goes out;* THIBAUT *retires on the opposite side.*

SCENE IX.

JOHANNA, *People. Afterwards her Sisters*

JOHANNA (*she has freed herself from the crowd and comes for ward*).
Remain I cannot—spirits chase me forth!
The organ's pealing tones like thunder sound,
The dome's arch'd roof threatens to o'erwhelm me!
I must escape and seek Heaven's wide expanse!
I left my banner in the sanctuary,
Never, oh never, will I touch it more!
It seem'd to me as if I had beheld
My sisters pass before me like a dream.
'Twas only a delusion!—They, alas!
Are far, far distant—inaccessible—
E'en as my childhood, as mine innocence!
MARGOT (*stepping forward*).
'Tis she! It is Johanna!
LOUISON (*hastening toward her*). O my sister!
JOHAN. Then it was no delusion—you are here—
Thee I embrace, Louison! Thee, my Margot!

Here, in this strange and crowded solitude,
I clasp once more my sisters' faithful breast!

MARG. She knows us still, she is our own kind sister

JOHAN. Your love hath led you to me here so far!
So very far! You are not wroth with her
Who left her home without one parting word:

LOUIS. God's unseen providence conducted thee.

MARG. Thy great renown, which agitates the world,
Which makes thy name the theme of every tongue,
Hath in our quiet village waken'd us,
And led us hither to this festival.
To witness all thy glory we are come;
And we are not alone!

JOHANNA (*quickly*). Our father 's here?
Where is he? Why doth he conceal himself?

MARG. Our father is not with us.

JOHANNA. Not with you?
He will not see me, then! You do not bring
His blessing for his child?

LOUISON. He knoweth not
That we are here.

JOHANNA. Not know it! Wherefore not?
You are embarrass'd, and you do not speak:
You look upon the ground! Where is our father?

MARG. Since thou hast left—

LOUISON (*making a sign to* MARGOT).
Margot!

MARGOT. Our father hath
Become dejected.

JOHANNA. Ah!

LOUISON. Console thyself!
Our sire's foreboding spirit well thou know'st!
He will collect himself, and be composed,
When he shall learn from us that thou art happy

MARG. And thou art happy? Yes, it must be so,
For thou art great and honour'd!

JOHANNA. I am so,
Now I again behold you, once again
Your voices hear, whose fond familiar tones
Bring to my mind my dear paternal fields.

When on my native hills I drove my herd,
Then I was happy as in Paradise—
I ne'er can be so more, no, never more!

[*She hides her face on* LOUISON'S *bosom.* CLAUDE MARIE, ETIENNE, *and* BERTRAND *appear, and remain timidly standing in the distance.*

MARG. Come, Bertrand! Claude Marie! come Etienne!
Our sister is not proud: she is so gentle,
And speaks so kindly,—more so than of yore,
When in our village she abode with us.

[*They draw near, and hold out their hands;* JOHANNA *gazes on them fixedly, and appears amazed.*

JOHAN. Where am I? Tell me! Was it all a dream,
A long, long dream? And am I now awake?
Am I away from Domremi? Is 't so?
I fell asleep beneath the Druid tree,
And I am now awake; and round me stand
The kind familiar forms? I only dream'd
Of all these battles, kings, and deeds of war,—
They were but shadows which before me pass'd;
For dreams are always vivid 'neath that tree.
How did you come to Rheims? How came I here?
No, I have never quitted Domremi!
Confess it to me, and rejoice my heart.

LOUIS. We are at Rheims. Thou hast not merely dream'd
Of these great deeds—thou hast achieved them all.
—Come to thyself, Johanna! Look around—
Thy splendid armour feel, of burnish'd gold!

[JOHANNA *lays her hand upon her breast, recollects herself, and shrinks back.*

BERT. Out of my hand thou didst receive this helm.

MARIE. No wonder thou shouldst think it all a dream;
For nothing in a dream could come to pass
More wonderful than what thou hast achieved.

JOHANNA (*quickly*).
Come, let us fly! I will return with you
Back to our village, to our father's bosom.

LOUIS. Oh come! Return with us!

JOHANNA. The people here

Exalt me far above what I deserve!
You have beheld me weak and like a child;
You love me, but you do not worship me!

MARG. Thou wilt abandon this magnificence!

JOHAN. I will throw off the hated ornaments,
Which were a barrier 'twixt my heart and yours.
And I will be a shepherdess again,
And, like a humble maiden, I will serve you,
And will with bitter penitence atone
That I above you vainly raised myself!

[*Trumpets sound.*

SCENE X.

The KING *comes forth from the Church. He is in the coronation robes.* AGNES SOREL, ARCHBISHOP, BURGUNDY, DUNOIS, LA HIRE, DU CHATEL, KNIGHTS, COURTIERS, *and* PEOPLE.

Many voices shout repeatedly, while the KING *advances.*

Long live the King! Long live King Charles the Seventh!

[*The trumpets sound. Upon a signal from the* KING, *the* HERALDS *with their staves command silence.*

KING. Thanks, my good people! Thank you for your love!
The crown, which God hath placed upon our brow,
Hath with our valiant swords been hardly won:
With noble blood 'tis wetted; but henceforth
The peaceful olive branch shall round it twine.
Let those who fought for us receive our thanks;
Our pardon, those who join'd the hostile ranks,
For God hath shown us mercy in our need,
And our first royal word shall now be—Mercy!

PEOPLE. Long live the King! Long live King Charles the good!

KING. From God alone, the highest potentate,
The monarchs of the French receive the crown;
But visibly from his almighty hand
Have we received it. [*Turning to the* MAIDEN.
Here stands the holy delegate of Heaven,
Who hath restored to you your rightful King,
And rent the yoke of foreign tyranny!
Her name shall equal that of holy Denis,
The guardian and protector of this realm;
And to her fame an altar shall be rear'd!

PEOPLE. Hail to the Maiden, the deliverer! [*Trumpets.*

KING (*to* JOHANNA).

If thou art born of woman, like ourselves,
Name aught that can augment thy happiness.
But if thy Fatherland is there above,
If in this virgin form thou dost conceal
The radiant glory of a heavenly nature,
From our deluded sense remove the veil,
And let us see thee in thy form of light,
As thou art seen in Heaven, that in the dust
We may bow down before thee.

[*A general silence; every eye is fixed upon the* MAIDEN.

JOHANNA (*with a sudden cry*). God! my father!

SCENE XI.

THIBAUT *comes forth from the crowd and stands opposite to her*

Many voices exclaim,

Her father!

THIBAUT. Yes, her miserable father,
Who did beget her, and whom God impels
Now to accuse his daughter.

BURGUNDY. Ha! What 's this?

DUCHAT. Now will the fearful truth appear!

THIBAUT (*to the* KING). Thou think'st
That thou art rescued through the power of God?
Deluded prince! Deluded multitude!
Ye have been rescued through the arts of Hell.

[*All step back with horror.*

DUNOIS. Is this man mad?

THIBAUT. Not I, but thou art mad,
And this wise bishop, and these noble lords,
Who think that through a weak and sinful maid
The God of Heaven would reveal himself.
Come, let us see, if to her father's face
She will maintain the specious, juggling arts,
Wherewith she hath deluded King and people.

Now, in the name of the blest Trinity,
Belong'st thou to the pure and holy ones?
[*A general silence; all eyes are fixed upon her she remains motionless.*

SOREL. God! she is dumb!

THIBAUT. Before that awful name,
Which even in the depths of Hell is fear'd,
She must be silent!—She a holy one,
By God commission'd?—On a cursed spot
It was conceived,—beneath the Druid tree
Where evil spirits have from olden time
Their sabbath held.—There her immortal soul
She barter'd with the enemy of man
For transient worldly glory. Let her bare
Her arm, and ye will see impress'd thereon,
The fatal marks of Hell!

BURGUNDY. Most horrible!
Yet we must needs believe a father's words,
Who 'gainst his daughter gives his evidence!

DUNOIS. No, no! the madman cannot be believed,
Who in his child brings shame upon himself!

SOREL (*to* JOHANNA).
O, Maiden, speak! this fatal silence break!
We firmly trust thee! we believe in thee!
One syllable from thee, one single word,
Shall be sufficient—speak! annihilate
This horrid accusation!—But declare
Thine innocence, and we will all believe thee.
[JOHANNA *remains motionless;* AGNES *steps back with horror.*

HIRE. She's frighten'd. Horror and astonishment
Impede her utterance.—Before a charge
So horrible e'en innocence must tremble.
[*He approaches her.*
Collect thyself, Johanna! innocence
Hath a triumphant look, whose lightning flash
Strikes slander to the earth! In noble wrath
Arise! look up, and punish this base doubt,
An insult to thy holy innocence.
[JOHANNA *remains motionless;* LA HIRE *steps back; the excitement increases.*

DUNOIS. Why do the people fear—the princes tremble?
I'll stake my honour on her innocence!
Here on the ground I throw my knightly gage—
Who now will venture to maintain her guilt?
[*A loud clap of thunder; all are horror-struck.*

THIB. . Answer, by Him whose thunders roll above!
Give me the lie. Proclaim thine innocence;
Say that the enemy hath not thy heart!
[*Another clap of thunder, louder than the first, the people fly on all sides.*

BURG. . God guard and save us! What appalling signs!

DUCHATEL (*to the* KING).
Come, come, my King! forsake this fearful place!

ARCHBISHOP (*to* JOHANNA).
I ask thee in God's name. Art thou thus silent
From consciousness of innocence or guilt?
If in thy favour the dread thunder speaks,
Touch with thy hand this cross and give a sign!
[JOHANNA *remains motionless. More violent peals of thunder. The* KING, AGNES SOREL, *the* ARCHBISHOP, BURGUNDY, LA HIRE, DUCHATEL, *retire.*

SCENE XII.

DUNOIS, JOHANNA.

DUNOIS. Thou art my wife—I have believed in thee
From the first glance, and I am still unchanged.
In thee I have more faith than in these signs,
Than in the thunder's voice, which speaks above.
In noble anger thou art silent thus;
Envelop'd in thy holy innocence,
Thou scornest to refute so base a charge.
—Still scorn it, maiden, but confide in me;
I never doubted of thine innocence.
Speak not one word—only extend thy hand,
In pledge and token, that thou wilt confide
In my protection and thine own good cause.
[*He extends his hand to her; she turns from him with a convulsive motion; he remains transfixed with horror.*

Scene XIII.

Johanna, Duchatel, Dunois, *afterwards* Raimond.

Duchatel (*returning*).

Johanna d'Arc! uninjured from the town
The King permits you to depart. The gates
Stand open to you. Fear no injury,—
You are protected by the royal word.
Come follow me, Dunois!—You cannot here
Longer abide with honour.—What an issue!

[*He retires.* Dunois *recovers from his stupor, casts one look upon* Johanna, *and retires. She remains standing for a moment quite alone. At length* Raimond *appears; he regards her for a time with silent sorrow, and then approaching takes her hand.*

Raim. Embrace this opportunity. The streets
Are empty now.—Your hand! I will conduct you.

[*On perceiving him, she gives the first sign of consciousness. She gazes on him fixedly, and looks up to Heaven; then taking his hand, she retires.*

ACT V.

A wild wood: charcoal-burners' huts in the distance. It is quite dark; violent thunder and lightning; firing heard at intervals.

Scene I.

Charcoal-Burner *and his* Wife.

Ch. B. This is a fearful storm, the heavens seem
As they would vent themselves in streams of fire;
So thick the darkness which usurps the day,
That one might see the stars. The angry winds
Bluster and howl like spirits loosed from Hell.
The firm earth trembles, and the aged elms,
Groaning, bow down their venerable tops.
Yet this terrific tumult, o'er our heads,
Which teacheth gentleness to savage beasts,

So that they seek the shelter of their caves,
Appeaseth not the bloody strife of men—
Amidst the raging of the wind and storm,
At intervals is heard the cannon's roar;
So near the hostile armaments approach,
The wood alone doth part them; any hour
May see them mingle in the shock of battle.

WIFE. . May God protect us then!—Our enemies,
Not long ago, were vanquish'd and dispersed.
How comes it, that they trouble us again?

CH. B. Because they now no longer fear the King.
Since that the Maid turned out to be a witch
At Rheims, the devil aideth us no longer,
And things have gone against us.

WIFE. Who comes here?

SCENE II.

RAIMOND *and* JOHANNA *enter.*

RAIM. . See! here are cottages; in them at least
We may find shelter from the raging storm.
You are not able longer to endure it.
Three days already you have wander'd on,
Shunning the eye of man—wild herbs and roots
Your only nourishment. Come enter in.
These are kind-hearted cottagers.

[*The storm subsides; the air grows bright and clear.*

CHARCOAL-BURNER. You seem
To need refreshment and repose—you're welcome
To what our humble roof can offer you!

WIFE. . What has a tender maid to do with arms?
Yet truly! these are rude and troublous times,
When even women don the coat of mail!
The Queen herself, proud Isabel, 'tis said,
Appears in armour in the hostile camp;
And a young maid, a shepherd's lowly daughter,
Has led the armies of our lord the King.

CH. B. What sayest thou? Enter the hut, and bring
A goblet of refreshment for the damsel.

[*She enters the hut.*

RAIMOND (*to* JOHANNA).

All men, you see, are not so cruel; here
E'en in the wilderness are gentle hearts.
Cheer up! the pelting storm hath spent its rage,
And, beaming peacefully, the sun declines.

CH. B. I fancy, as you travel thus in arms,
You seek the army of the King.—Take heed!
Not far remote the English are encamp'd,
Their troops are roaming idly through the wood.

RAIM. Alas for us! how then can we escape?

CH. B. Stay here till from the town my boy returns,
He shall conduct you safe by secret paths.
You need not fear—we know each hidden way.

RAIMOND (*to* JOHANNA).

Put off your helmet and your coat-of-mail,
They will not now protect you, but betray.

[JOHANNA *shakes her head.*

CH. B. The maid seems very sad—hush! who comes here?

SCENE III.

CHARCOAL-BURNER'S WIFE *comes out of the hut with a bowl.*
A BOY.

WIFE. It is our boy, whom we expected back.

[*To* JOHANNA.

Drink, noble maiden! may God bless it to you!

CHACOAL-BURNER (*to his son*).

Art come, Anet? What news?

[*The boy looks at* JOHANNA, *who is just raising the bowl to her lips; he recognises her, steps forward and snatches it from her.*

BOY. O mother! mother!
Whom do you entertain? This is the witch
Of Orleans!

CHARCOAL-BURNER (*and his* WIFE).

God be gracious to our souls!

[*They cross themselves and fly.*

SCENE IV.

RAIMOND, JOHANNA.

JOHANNA (*calmly and gently*).

Thou seest, I am follow'd by the curse,

And all fly from me. Do thou leave me too;
Seek safety for thyself.

RAIMOND. I leave thee! now!
Alas who then would bear thee company?

JOHAN. I am not unaccompanied. Thou hast
Heard the loud thunder rolling o'er my head.
My destiny conducts me. Do not fear;
Without my seeking I shall reach the goal.

RAIM. . And whither wouldst thou go? Here stand our foes,
Who have against thee bloody vengeance sworn—
There stand our people, who have banish'd thee—

JOHAN. Nought will befall me but what Heaven ordains.

RAIM. . Who will provide thee food? and who protect thee
From savage beasts, and still more savage men?
Who cherish thee in sickness and in grief?

JOHAN. I know all roots and healing herbs; my sheep
Taught me to know the poisonous from the wholesome.
I understand the movements of the stars,
And the clouds' flight; I also hear the sound
Of hidden springs. Man hath not many wants,
And nature richly ministers to life.

RAIMOND (*seizing her hand*).
Wilt thou not look within? Oh wilt thou not
Repent thy sin, be reconciled to God,
And to the bosom of the Church return?

JOHAN. Thou hold'st me guilty of this heavy sin?

RAIM. . Needs must I—thou didst silently confess—

JOHAN. Thou, who hast followed me in misery,
The only being who continued true,
Who clave to me when all the world forsook,
Thou also hold'st me for a reprobate,
Who hath renounced her God—

[RAIMOND *is silent.*
Oh this is hard!

RAIMOND (*in astonishment*).
And thou wert really then no sorceress?

JOHAN. A sorceress!

RAIMOND. And all these miracles
Thou hast accomplish'd through the power of God
And of his holy saints?

JOHANNA. Through whom besides?

RAIM. . And thou wert silent to that fearful charge?
Thou speakest now, and yet before the King,
When words would have avail'd thee, thou wert dumb!
JOHAN. I silently submitted to the doom
Which God, my lord and master, o'er me hung
RAIM. . Thou couldst not to thy father aught reply?
JOHAN. Coming from him, methought it came from God;
And fatherly the chastisement will prove.
RAIM. . The heavens themselves bore witness to thy guilt!
JOHAN. The heavens spoke, and therefore I was silent.
RAIM. . Thou with one word couldst clear thyself, and hast
In this unhappy error left the world?
JOHAN. . It was no error—'twas the will of Heaven.
RAIM. . Thou innocently sufferedst this shame,
And no complaint proceeded from thy lips!
—I am amazed at thee, I stand o'erwhelm'd.
My heart is troubled in its inmost depths
Most gladly I receive the word as truth,
For to believe thy guilt was hard indeed.
But could I ever dream a human heart
Would meet in silence such a fearful doom!
JOHAN. Should I deserve to be Heaven's messenger,
Unless the Master's will I blindly honour'd?
And I am not so wretched as thou thinkest.
I feel privation—this in humble life
Is no misfortune; I'm a fugitive,—
But in the waste I learn'd to know myself.
When honour's dazzling radiance round me shone,
There was a painful struggle in my breast;
I was most wretched, when to all I seem'd
Most worthy to be envied.—Now my mind
Is heal'd once more, and this fierce storm in nature,
Which threaten'd your destruction, was my friend;
It purified alike the world and me!
I feel an inward peace—and, come what may,
Of no more weakness am I conscious now!
RAIM. Oh let us hasten! come, let us proclaim
Thine innocence aloud to all the world!
JOHAN. He who sent this delusion will dispel it!
The fruit of fate falls only when 'tis ripe!
A day is coming that will clear my name,
When those who now condemn and banish me,

Will see their error and will weep my doom.

RAIM. . And shall I wait in silence, until chance—

JOHANNA (*gently taking his hand*).

Thy sense is shrouded by an earthly veil,
And dwelleth only on external things.
Mine eye hath gazed on the invisible!
—Without permission from our God no hair
Falls from the head of man.—Seest thou the sun
Declining in the west? So certainly
As morn returneth in her radiant light,
Infallibly the day of truth shall come!

SCENE V.

QUEEN ISABEL, *with soldiers, appears in the background.*

ISABEL (*behind the scene*).

This is the way toward the English camp!

RAIM. . Alas! the foe!

[*The soldiers advance, and perceiving* JOHANNA *fall back in terror.*

ISABEL. What now obstructs the march?

SOLD. . May God protect us!

ISABEL. Do ye see a spirit?
How! Are ye soldiers? Ye are cowards all!

[*She presses forward, but starts back on beholding the* MAIDEN.

What do I see!

[*She collects herself quickly and approaches her.*

Submit thyself! Thou art
My prisoner!

JOHANNA. I am

[RAIMOND *flies in despair.*

ISABEL (*to the soldiers*). Lay her in chains!

[*The soldiers timidly approach the* MAIDEN; *she extends her arms and is chained.*

Is this the mighty, the terrific one,
Who chased your warriors like a flock of lambs,
Who, powerless now, cannot protect herself?
Doth she work miracles with credulous fools,
And lose her influence when she meets a man?

[*To the* MAIDEN.

Why didst thou leave the army? Where 's Dunois,
Thy knight and thy protector

JOHANNA. I am banished.

[ISABEL, *stepping back astonished.*

ISABEL. What say'st thou? Thou art banished? By the Dauphin?

JOHAN. Inquire no further! I am in thy power,
Decide my fate.

ISABEL. Banish'd, because thou hast
Snatched him from ruin, placed upon his brow
The crown at Rheims, and made him king of France?
Banish'd! Therein I recognise my son!
—Conduct her to the camp, and let the host
Behold the phantom before whom they trembled!
She a magician? Her sole magic lies
In your delusion and your cowardice!
She is a fool who sacrificed herself
To save her king, and reapeth for her pains
A king's reward —Bear her to Lionel.—
The fortune of the French I send him bound;
I'll follow her anon.

JOHANNA. To Lionel?
Slay me at once, ere send me unto him.

ISABEL (*to the soldiers*).
Obey your orders, soldiers! Bear her hence! [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

JOHANNA, SOLDIERS.

JOHANNA (*to the soldiers*).
Ye English, suffer not that I escape
Alive out of your hands! Revenge yourselves!
Unsheath your weapons, plunge them in my heart,
And drag me lifeless to your general's feet!
Remember, it was I, who slew your heroes,
Who never showed compassion, who poured forth
Torrents of English blood, who, from your sons,
Snatched the sweet pleasure of returning home!
Take now a bloody vengeance! Murder me!
I now am in your power; I may perchance
Not always be so weak.

CONDUCTOR OF THE SOLDIERS. Obey the Queen!

JOHAN. Must I be yet more wretched than I was!
Unpitying Virgin! Heavy is thy hand!
Hast thou completely thrust me from thy favour?
No God appears, no angel shows himself;

Closed are Heaven's portals, miracles have ceased.
[*She follows the* SOLDIERS.

SCENE VII.

The French Camp.

DUNOIS, *between the* ARCHBISHOP *and* DUCHATEL.

ARCH. . Conquer your sullen indignation, Prince!
Return with us! Come back unto your King!
In this emergency abandon not
The general cause, when we are sorely pressed,
And stand in need of your heroic arm.

DUNOIS. Why are ye sorely pressed? Why doth the foe
Again exalt himself? all was achieved;—
France was triumphant—war was at an end;—
The saviour you have banished; you henceforth
May save yourselves; I'll not again behold
The camp wherein the Maid abideth not.

DUCHAT. Think better of it, Prince! Dismiss us not
With such an answer!

DUNOIS. Silence, Duchatel!
You 're hateful to me; I'll hear nought from you;
You were the first who doubted of her truth.

ARCH. . Who had not wavered on that fatal day,
And been bewildered, when so many signs
Bore evidence against her! We were stunned,
Our hearts were crushed beneath the sudden blow.
—Who in that hour of dread could weigh the proofs?
Our calmer judgment now returns to us,
We see the Maid, as when she walked with us,
Nor have we any fault to charge her with.
We are perplexed;—we fear that we have done
A grievous wrong.—The King is penitent,
The Duke remorseful, comfortless La Hire,
And every heart doth shroud itself in wo.

DUNOIS. She a deluder? If celestial truth
Would clothe herself in a corporeal form,
She needs must choose the features of the Maiden.
If purity of heart, faith, innocence,
Dwell anywhere on earth, upon her lips
And in her eyes' clear depths they find their home!

ARCH. . May the Almighty, through a miracle,
Shed light upon this awful mystery,

Which baffles human insight.—Howsoe'er
This sad perplexity may be resolved,
One of two grievous sins we have committed!
Either in fight we have availed ourselves
Of hellish arms, or banished hence a saint!
And both call down upon this wretched land
The vengeance and the punishment of Heaven!

SCENE VIII.

The same, a NOBLEMAN, *afterwards* RAIMOND.

NOBLE. A shepherd youth inquires after your Highness,
He urgently entreats an interview,
He says, he cometh from the Maiden—

DUNOIS. Haste!
Conduct him hither! He doth come from her!

[*The* NOBLEMAN *opens the door to* RAIMOND, DUNOIS *hastens to meet him.*

Where is she? Where 's the Maid?

RAIMOND. Hail! noble Prince!
And blessed am I that I find with you
This holy man, the shield of the oppressed,
The father of the poor and destitute!

DUNOIS. Where is the Maiden?

ARCH. Speak, my son, inform us!

RAIM. She is not, sir, a wicked sorceress!
To God and all his saints I make appeal.
An error blinds the people. You've cast forth
God's messenger, you've banished innocence!

DUNOIS. Where is she?

RAIMOND. I accompanied her flight
Towards the wood of Ardennes; there she hath
Revealed to me her spirit's inmost depths.
In torture I'll expire, and will resign
My hopes of everlasting happiness,
If she's not guiltless, sir, of every sin!

DUNOIS. The sun in Heaven is not more pure than she!
Where is she? Speak!

RAIMOND. If God hath turned your hearts,
Oh hasten, I entreat you—rescue her—
She is a prisoner in the English camp.

DUNOIS. A prisoner say you?

ARCHBISHOP. Poor unfortunate!
RAIM. . There in the forest as we sought for shelter,
We were encounter'd by Queen Isabel,
Who seized and sent her to the English host.
O from a cruel death deliver her
Who hath full many a time deliver'd you!
DUNOIS. Sound an alarm! to arms! up! beat the drums.
Forth to the field! Let France appear in arms!
The crown and the palladium are at stake!
Our honour is in pledge! risk blood and life!
She must be rescued ere the day is done!

[*Exit.*

A watch tower—an opening above.

SCENE IX.

JOHANNA *and* LIONEL.

FASTOLFE (*entering hastily*).
The people can no longer be restrain'd.
With fury they demand the Maiden's death.
In vain your opposition. Let her die,
And throw her head down from the battlements!
Her blood alone will satisfy the host.
ISABEL (*coming in*).
With ladders they begin to scale the walls.
Appease the angry people! Will you wait
Till in blind fury they o'erthrow the tower,
And we beneath its ruins are destroy'd?
Protect her here you cannot.—Give her up!
LIONEL Let them storm on! In fury let them rage!
Firm is this castle, and beneath its ruins
I will be buried ere I yield to them.
—Johanna, answer me! only be mine,
And I will shield thee 'gainst a world in arms.
ISABEL. Are you a man?
LIONEL. Thy friends have cast thee off.
To thy ungrateful country thou dost owe
Duty and faith no longer. The false cowards
Who sought thy hand, forsake thee in thy need.
They for thy honour venture not the fight,
But I, against my people and 'gainst thine,
Will be thy champion.—Once thou didst confess

My life was dear to thee: in combat then
I stood before thee as thine enemy,—
Thou hast not now a single friend but me!

JOHAN. Thou art my people's enemy and mine.
Between us there can be no fellowship.
Thee I can never love, but if thy heart
Cherish affection for me, let it bring
A blessing on my people.—Lead thy troops
Far from the borders of my Fatherland;
Give up the keys of all the captured towns,
Restore the booty, set the captives free,
Send hostages the compact to confirm,
And peace I offer thee in my King's name.

ISABEL. Wilt thou, a captive, dictate laws to us?

JOHAN. It must be done; 'tis useless to delay.
Never, oh never, will this land endure
The English yoke; sooner will France become
A mighty sepulchre for England's hosts.
Fallen in battle are your bravest chiefs.
Think how you may achieve a safe retreat;
Your fame is forfeited, your power is lost.

ISABEL. Can you endure her raving insolence?

SCENE X.

A CAPTAIN *enters hastily.*

CAPT. . Haste, general! Prepare the host for battle!
The French with flying banners come this way,
Their shining weapons glitter in the vale.

JOHANNA (*with enthusiasm*).
My people come this way! Proud England, now,
Forth in the field! now boldly must you fight!

FASTOL. Deluded woman, moderate your joy!
You will not see the issue of this day.

JOHAN. My friends will win the fight and I shall die!
The gallant heroes need my arm no more.

LIONEL. These dastard enemies I scorn! They have
In twenty battles fled before our arms,
Ere this heroic Maiden fought for them!
All the whole nation I despise, save one,
And this one they have banish'd.—Come, Fastolfe,
We soon will give them such another day

As that of Poictiers, and of Agincourt.
Do you remain within the fortress, Queen,
And guard the Maiden till the fight is o'er.
I leave for your protection fifty knights.

FASTOL. How! general, shall we march against the foe
And leave this raging fury in our rear?

JOHAN What! can a fetter'd woman frighten thee?

LIONEL. Promise, Johanna, not to free thyself!

JOHAN. To free myself is now my only wish.

ISABEL. Bind her with triple chains! I pledge my life
That she shall not escape.

[*She is bound with heavy chains.*

LIONEL (*to* JOHANNA). Thou will'st it so!
Thou dost compel us! still it rests with thee!
Renounce the French,—the English banner bear,
And thou art free, and these rude savage men
Who now desire thy blood shall do thy will!

FASTOLFE (*urgently*).
Away, away, my general!

JOHANNA. Spare thy words!
The French are drawing near.—Defend thyself!

[*Trumpets sound,* LIONEL *hastens forth.*

FASTOL. You know your duty, Queen! if Fate declares
Against us, should you see our people fly—

ISABEL (*showing a dagger*).
Fear not! She shall not live to see our fall.

FASTOLFE (*to* JOHANNA).
Thou knowest what awaits thee, now implore
A blessing on the weapons of thy people! [*Exit.*

SCENE XI.

ISABEL, JOHANNA, SOLDIERS.

JOHAN. Ay! that I will! no power can hinder me.
Hark to that sound, the war march of my people!
How its triumphant notes inspire my heart!
Ruin to England! victory to France!
Up, valiant countrymen! The Maid is near:
She cannot, as of yore, before you bear
Her banner—she is bound with heavy chains;
But freely from her prison soars her soul,
Upon the pinions of your battle song.

ISABEL (*to a* SOLDIER).
Ascend the watch-tower which commands the field,
And thence report the progress of the fight.
[SOLDIER *ascends.*
JOHAN. Courage, my people! 'Tis the final struggle—
Another victory, and the foe lies low!
ISABEL. What see'st thou?
SOLDIER. They 're already in close fight.
A furious warrior, on a Barbary steed,
In tiger's skin, leads forward the gens d'armes.
JOHAN. That 's Count Dunois! on, gallant warrior!
Conquest goes with thee.
SOLDIER. The Burgundian duke
Attacks the bridge.
ISABEL. Would that ten hostile spears
Might his perfidious heart transfix, the traitor!
SOLD. . Lord Fastolfe gallantly opposes him.
Now they dismount—they combat man to man,
Our people and the troops of Burgundy.
ISABEL. Behold'st thou not the Dauphin? See'st thou not
The royal banner wave?
SOLDIER. A cloud of dust
Shrouds every thing. I can distinguish nought.
JOHAN. Had he my eyes, or stood I there aloft,
The smallest speck would not elude my gaze!
The wild fowl I can number on the wing,
And mark the falcon in his towering flight.
SOLD. . There is a fearful tumult near the trench;
The chiefs, it seems, the nobles, combat there.
ISABEL. Still doth our banner wave?
SOLDIER. It proudly floats.
JOHAN. Could I look through the loopholes of the wall,
I with my glance the battle would control!
SOLD. . Alas! What do I see! Our general 's
Surrounded by the foe!
ISABEL (*points the dagger at* JOHANNA). Die, wretch!
SOLDIER (*quickly*). He 's free!
The gallant Fastolfe in the rear attacks
The enemy—he breaks their serried ranks.
ISABEL (*withdrawing the dagger*).
There spoke thy angel!

SOLDIER. Victory! They fly!
ISABEL. Who fly?
SOLDIER. The French and the Burgundians fly;
The field is cover'd o'er with fugitives.
JOHAN. My God! Thou wilt not thus abandon me!
SOLD. . Yonder they lead a sorely wounded knight;
The people rush to aid him—he 's a prince.
ISABEL. One of our country, or a son of France?
SOLD. . They loose his helmet—it is Count Dunois
JOHANNA (*seizes her fetters with convulsive violence*).
And I am nothing but a fetter'd woman!
SOLD. . Look yonder! Who the azure mantle wears,
Border'd with gold?
JOHANNA. That is my Lord, the King.
SOLD. . His horse is restive, plunges, rears, and falls—
He struggles hard to extricate himself—
[JOHANNA *accompanies these words with passionate movements.*
Our troops are pressing on in full career,
They near him, reach him—they surround him now.
JOHAN. Oh, have the heavens above no angels more!
ISABEL (*laughing scornfully*).
Now is the time, Deliverer—now deliver!
JOHANNA (*throws herself upon her knees, and prays with passionate violence*).
Hear me, O God, in my extremity!
In fervent supplication up to Thee,
Up to thy heaven above, I send my soul.
The fragile texture of a spider's web,
As a ship's cable, thou canst render strong;
Easy it is to thine omnipotence
To change these fetters into spiders' webs—
Command it, and these massy chains shall fall,
And these thick walls be rent. Thou, Lord, of old
Didst strengthen Samson, when, enchain'd and blind,
He bore the bitter scorn of his proud foes.
Trusting in thee, he seized with mighty power
The pillars of his prison, bow'd himself,
And overthrew the structure.
SOLDIER. Triumph!
ISABEL. How?

SOLD. . The King is ta'en!

JOHANNA (*springing up*). Then God be gracious to me!

[*She seizes her chains violently with both hands, and breaks them asunder. At the same moment rushing upon the nearest soldier, she seizes his sword and hurries out. All gaze after her, transfixed with astonishment.*

SCENE XII.

The same, without JOHANNA.

ISABEL (*after a long pause*).

How was it? Did I dream? Where is she gone?
How did she break these ponderous iron chains?
A world could not have made me credit it,
If I had not beheld it with these eyes.

SOLDIER (*from the tower*).

How? Hath she wings? Hath the wind borne her down?

ISABEL. Is she below?

SOLDIER. She strides amidst the fight:
Her course outspeeds my sight—Now she is here—
Now there—I see her everywhere at once!
—She separates the troops—all yield to her;
The scatter'd French collect—they form anew!
—Alas! what do I see! Our people cast
Their weapons to the ground, our banners sink—

ISABEL. What! Will she snatch from us the victory?

SOLD. . She presses forward, right towards the King.
She reaches him—she bears him from the fight—
Lord Fastolfe falls—the general is ta'en!

ISABEL. I 'll hear no more. Come down!

SOLD. . Fly, Queen! you will be taken by surprise.
Arm'd soldiers are advancing tow'rds the tower.

[*He comes down.*

ISABEL (*drawing her sword*).

Then fight, ye cowards.

Scene XIII.

LA HIRE, *with soldiers. At his entrance the people of the* QUEEN *lay down their arms.*

LA HIRE (*approaching her respectfully*).
Queen, submit yourself—
Your knights have yielded—to resist is vain!
—Accept my proffer'd services. Command
Where you would be conducted.

ISABEL. Every place
The same, where I encounter not the Dauphin.

[*She resigns her sword, and follows him with the soldiers.*

The Scene changes to the battle field

Scene XIV.

Soldiers with flying banners occupy the background. Before them the KING *and the* DUKE OF BURGUNDY *appear, bearing* JOHANNA *in their arms; she is mortally wounded, and apparently lifeless. They advance slowly to the front of the stage.* AGNES SOREL *rushes in.*

SOREL (*throwing herself on the bosom of the* KING).
You 're free—you live—I have you back again!

KING. . Yes, I am free—I am so at this price!
[*Pointing to* JOHANNA.

SOREL. Johanna!—God! she's dying!

BURGUNDY. She is gone!
An angel passeth hence! See, how she lies,
Easy and tranquil, like a sleeping child!
The peace of Heaven around her features plays.
The breath of life no longer heaves her breast,
But vital warmth still lingers in her hand.

KING. . She 's gone!—She never will awaken more,
Her eye will gaze no more on earthly things.
She soars on high, a spirit glorified,
She seeth not our grief, our penitence.

SOREL. Her eyes unclose—she lives!

BURGUNDY (*in astonishment*). Can she return
Back from the grave, triumphant e'en o'er death?
She riseth up! She standeth!

JOHANNA (*standing up, and looking round*). Where am I?
BURG. . With thine own people, Maiden—with thy friends!
KING. . Supported by thy friend, and by thy King.
JOHANNA (*after looking at him fixedly for some time*).
No! I am not a sorceress! Indeed
I am not one.
KING. Thou 'rt holy, as an angel;
A cloud of error dimm'd our mental sight.
JOHANNA (*gazing round her with a joyful smile*).
And am I really, then, among my friends,
And am no more rejected and despised?
They curse me not—kindly they look on me!
—Yes, all around me now seems clear again!
That is my King!—the banners these of France!
My banner I behold not—where is it?
Without my banner I dare not appear;
To me it was confided by my Lord,
And I before his throne must lay it down;
I there may show it, for I bore it truly.
KING (*averting his face*).
Give her the banner!
[*It is given to her. She stands quite unsupported, the banner in her hand. The heaven is illumined by a rosy light.*
JOHAN. See you the rainbow yonder in the air?
Its golden portals Heaven doth wide unfold,
Amid the angel choir she radiant stands,
The eternal Son she claspeth to her breast,
Her arms she stretcheth forth to me in love.
How is it with me? Light clouds bear me up—
My ponderous mail becomes a winged robe;
I mount—I fly—back rolls the dwindling earth—
Brief is the sorrow—endless is the joy!
[*Her banner falls, and she sinks lifeless on the ground. All remain for some time in speechless sorrow Upon a signal from the* KING, *all the banners are gently placed over her, so that she is entirely concealed by them.*

ON THE

USE OF THE CHORUS

IN TRAGEDY.

A Poetical work must vindicate itself:—if the execution be defective, little aid can be derived from commentaries.

On these grounds, I might safely leave the Chorus to be its own advocate, if we had ever seen it presented in an appropriate manner. But it must be remembered that a dramatic composition first assumes the character of a whole by means of representation on the stage. The Poet supplies only the words, to which, in a lyrical tragedy, music and rhythmical motion are essential accessories. It follows, then, that if the Chorus is deprived of accompaniments appealing so powerfully to the senses, it will appear a superfluity in the economy of the drama—a mere hindrance to the development of the plot—destructive to the illusion of the scene, and wearisome to the spectators.

To do justice to the Chorus, more especially if our aims in Poetry be of a grand and elevated character, we must transport ourselves from the actual to a possible stage. It is the privilege of Art to furnish for itself whatever is requisite, and the accidental deficiency of auxiliaries ought not to confine the plastic imagination of the Poet. He aspires to whatever is most dignified, he labours to realize the ideal in his own mind—though in the execution of his purpose he must needs accommodate himself to circumstances.

The assertion so commonly made, that the Public degrades Art, is not well founded. It is the artist that brings the Public to the level of his own conceptions; and, in every age in which Art has gone to decay, it has fallen through its professors. The People need feeling alone, and feeling they possess. They take their station before the curtain with an unvoiced longing, with a multifarious capacity. They bring with them an aptitude for what is highest—they derive the greatest pleasure from what is judicious and true; and if, with these powers of appreciation, they begin to be satisfied with inferior productions, still, if they have once tasted what is excellent, they will, in the end, insist on having it supplied to them.

It is sometimes objected that the Poet may labour according to an Ideal—that the critic may judge from ideas, but that mere executive art is subject to contingencies, and depends for effect on the occasion. Managers will be obstinate; actors are bent on display—the audience is inattentive and unruly. Their object is relaxation, and they are disappointed if mental exertion be required, when they expected only amusement. But if the Theatre be made instrumental towards higher objects, the pleasure of the spectator will not be increased, but ennobled. It will be a diversion, but a poetical one. All Art is dedicated to pleasure, and there can be no higher and worthier end than to make men happy. The true Art is that which provides the

highest degree of pleasure; and this consists in the abandonment of spirit to the free play of all its faculties.

Every one expects from the imaginative arts a certain emancipation from the bounds of reality: we are willing to give a scope to Fancy, and recreate ourselves with the possible. The man who expects it the least will nevertheless forget his ordinary pursuits, his every-day existence and individuality, and experience delight from uncommon incidents:—if he be of a serious turn of mind, he will acknowledge on the stage that moral government of the world which he fails to discover in real life. But he is, at the same time, perfectly aware that all is an empty show, and that, in a true sense, he is feeding only on dreams. When he returns from the theatre to the world of realities, he is again compressed within its narrow bounds; he is its denizen as before—for it remains what it was, and in him nothing has been changed. What, then, has he gained beyond a momentary illusive pleasure which vanished with the occasion?

It is because a passing recreation is alone desired, that a mere show of truth is thought sufficient. I mean that probability or vraisemblance which is so highly esteemed, but which the commonest workers are able to substitute for the true.

Art has for its object not merely to afford a transient pleasure, to excite to a momentary dream of liberty; its aim is to make us absolutely free; and this it accomplishes by awakening, exercising, and perfecting in us a power to remove to an objective distance the sensible world; (which otherwise only burdens us as rugged matter, and presses us down with a brute influence;) to transform it into the free working of our spirit, and thus acquire a dominion over the material by means of ideas. For the very reason also that true Art requires somewhat of the objective and real, it is not satisfied with a show of truth. It rears its ideal edifice on Truth itself—on the solid and deep foundations of Nature.

But how Art can be at once altogether ideal, yet in the strictest sense real;—how it can entirely leave the actual, and yet harmonize with Nature, is a problem to the multitude:—and hence the distorted views which prevail in regard to poetical and plastic works; for to ordinary judgments these two requisites seem to counteract each other.

It is commonly supposed that one may be attained by the sacrifice of the other:—the result is a failure to arrive at either. One to whom nature has given a true sensibility, but denied the plastic imaginative power, will be a faithful painter of the real; he will adapt casual appearances, but never catch the spirit of Nature. He will only reproduce to us the matter of the world, which, not being our own work, the product of our creative spirit, can never have the beneficent operation of Art, of which the essence is freedom. Serious, indeed, but unpleasing, is the cast of thought with which such an artist and poet dismisses us;—we feel ourselves painfully thrust back into the narrow sphere of reality by means of the very art which ought to have emancipated us. On the other hand, a writer, endowed with a lively fancy, but destitute of warmth and individuality of feeling, will not concern himself in the least about truth; he will sport with the stuff of the world, and endeavour to surprise by whimsical combinations; and as his whole performance is nothing but foam and glitter, he will, it is true, engage the attention for a time, but build up and confirm nothing in the understanding. His playfulness is, like the gravity of the other, thoroughly unpoetical. To string together at

will fantastical images, is not to travel into the realm of the ideal; and the imitative reproduction of the actual cannot be called the representation of nature. Both requisites stand so little in contradiction to each other that they are rather one and the same thing; that Art is only true insomuch as it altogether forsakes the actual, and becomes purely ideal. Nature herself is an idea of the mind, and is never presented to the senses. She lies under the veil of appearances, but is herself never apparent. To the art of the ideal alone is lent, or rather, absolutely given, the privilege to grasp the spirit of the All, and bind it in a corporeal form.

Yet, in truth, even Art cannot present it to the senses, but by means of her creative power to the imaginative faculty alone; and it is thus that she becomes more true than all reality, and more real than all experience. It follows from these premises that the artist can use no single element taken from reality as he finds it—that his work must be ideal in all its parts, if it be designed to have, as it were, an intrinsic reality, and to harmonize with nature.

What is true of Art and Poetry, in the abstract, holds good as to their various kinds; and we may apply what has been advanced to the subject of tragedy. In this department, it is still necessary to controvert the ordinary notion of the natural, with which poetry is altogether incompatible. A certain ideality has been allowed in painting, though I fear, rather for conventional reasons, than on grounds of conviction; but in dramatic works what is desired is illusion, which, if it could be accomplished by means of the actual, would be, at best, a paltry deception. All the externals of a theatrical representation are opposed to this notion; all is merely a symbol of the real. The day itself in a theatre is an artificial one; the metrical dialogue is itself ideal; yet the conduct of the play must forsooth be real, and the general effect sacrificed to a part. Thus the French, who have utterly misconceived the spirit of the ancients, adopted on their stage the unities of time and place in the most common and empirical sense; as though there were any place but the bare ideal one, or any other time than the mere sequence of the incidents.

By the introduction of a metrical dialogue an important progress has been made towards the poetical Tragedy. A few lyrical dramas have been successful on the stage, and Poetry, by its own living energy, has triumphed over prevailing prejudices. But so long as these erroneous views are entertained little has been done—for it is not enough barely to tolerate as a poetic licence that which, is in truth, the essence of all poetry. The introduction of the Chorus would be the last and decisive step; and if it only served this end, namely, to declare open and honourable warfare against naturalism in art, it would be for us a living wall which Tragedy had drawn around herself, to guard her from contact with the world of reality, and maintain her own ideal soil, her poetical freedom.

It is well known that the Greek tragedy had its origin in the Chorus; and though, in process of time, it became independent, still it may be said that poetically, and in spirit, the Chorus was the source of its existence, and that without these persevering supporters and witnesses of the incident a totally different order of poetry would have grown out of the drama. The abolition of the Chorus, and the debasement of this sensibly powerful organ into the characterless substitute of a confidant, is, by no

means, such an improvement in tragedy as the French, and their imitators, would have it supposed to be.

The old Tragedy, which at first only concerned itself with gods, heroes and kings, introduced the Chorus as an essential accompaniment. The poets found it in nature, and for that reason employed it. It grew out of the poetical aspect of real life. In the new Tragedy it becomes an organ of art which aids in making the poetry prominent. The modern poet no longer finds the Chorus in nature; he must needs create and introduce it poetically; that is, he must resolve on such an adaptation of his story as will admit of its retrocession to those primitive times, and to that simple form of life.

The Chorus thus renders more substantial service to the modern dramatist than to the old poet—and for this reason, that it transforms the commonplace actual world into the old poetical one; that it enables him to dispense with all that is repugnant to poetry, and conducts him back to the most simple, original, and genuine motives of action. The palaces of kings are in these days closed—courts of justice have been transferred from the gates of cities to the interior of buildings; writing has narrowed the province of speech; the people itself—the sensibly living mass—when it does not operate as brute force, has become a part of the civil polity, and thereby an abstract idea in our minds; the deities have returned within the bosoms of mankind. The poet must reopen the palaces—he must place courts of justice beneath the canopy of heaven—restore the gods, reproduce every extreme which the artificial frame of actual life has abolished—throw aside every factitious influence on the mind or condition of man which impedes the manifestation of his inward nature and primitive character, as the statuary rejects modern costume:—and of all external circumstances adopts nothing but what is palpable in the highest of forms—that of humanity.

But precisely as the painter throws around his figures draperies of ample volume, to fill up the space of his picture richly and gracefully, to arrange it several parts in harmonious masses, to give due play to colour, which charms and refreshes the eye—and at once to envelop human forms in a spiritual veil, and make them visible—so the tragic poet inlays and entwines his rigidly contracted plot and the strong outlines of his characters with a tissue of lyrical magnificence, in which, as in flowing robes of purple, they move freely and nobly, with a sustained dignity and exalted repose.

In a higher organization, the material, or the elementary, need not be visible; the chemical colour vanishes in the finer tints of the imaginative one. The material, however, has its peculiar effect, and may be included in a artistical composition. But it must deserve its place by animation, fulness and harmony, and give value to the ideal forms which it surrounds, instead of stifling them by its weight.

In respect of the pictorial art, this is obvious to ordinary apprehension, yet in poetry likewise, and in the tragical kind, which is our immediate subject, the same doctrine holds good. Whatever fascinates the senses alone, as mere matter, and the rude element of a work of art:—if it take the lead it will inevitably destroy the poetical—which lies at the exact medium between the ideal and the sensible. But man is so constituted that he is ever impatient to pass from what is fanciful to what is common; and reflection must, therefore, have its place even in tragedy. But to merit this place it must, by means of delivery, recover what it wants in actual life; for if the two elements

of poetry, the ideal and the sensible, do not operate with an inward mutuality, they must at least act as allies—or poetry is out of the question. If the balance be not intrinsically perfect, the equipoise can only be maintained by an agitation of both scales.

This is what the Chorus effects in tragedy. It is, in itself, not an individual but a general conception, yet it is represented by a palpable body which appeals to the senses with an imposing grandeur. It forsakes the contracted sphere of the incidents to dilate itself over the past and the future, over distant times and nations, and general humanity, to deduce the grand results of life, and pronounce the lessons of wisdom. But all this it does with the full power of fancy—with a bold lyrical freedom which ascends, as with godlike step, to the topmost height of worldly things; and it effects it in conjunction with the whole sensible influence of melody and rhythm, in tones and movements.

The Chorus thus exercises a purifying influence on tragic poetry, insomuch as it keeps reflection apart from the incidents, and by this separation arms it with a poetical vigour; as the painter, by means of a rich drapery, changes the ordinary poverty of costume into a charm and an ornament.

But as the painter finds himself obliged to strengthen the tone of colour of the living subject, in order to counterbalance the material influences—so the lyrical effusions of the Chorus impose upon the poet the necessity of a proportionate elevation of his general diction. It is the Chorus alone which entitles the poet to employ this fulness of tone, which at once charms the senses, pervade the spirit and expands the mind. This one giant form on his canvas obliges him to mount all his figures on the cothurnus, and thus impart a tragical grandeur to his picture. If the Chorus be taken away, the diction of the tragedy must generally be lowered, or what is now great and majestic will appear forced and overstrained. The old Chorus introduced into the French tragedy would present it in all its poverty, and reduce it to nothing; yet, without doubt, the same accompaniment would impart to Shakspere's tragedy its true significance.

As the Chorus gives life to the language—so also it gives repose to the action; but it is that beautiful and lofty repose which is the characteristic of a true work of art. For the mind of the spectator ought to maintain its freedom through the most impassioned scenes; it should not be the mere prey of impressions, but calmly and severely detach itself from the emotions which it suffers. The commonplace objection made to the Chorus, that it disturbs the illusion, and blunts the edge of the feelings, is what constitutes its highest recommendation; for it is this blind force of the affections which the true artist deprecates—this illusion is what he disdains to excite. If the strokes which Tragedy inflicts on our bosoms followed without respite—the passion would overpower the action. We should mix ourselves up with the subject matter, and no longer stand above it. It is by holding asunder the different parts, and stepping between the passions with its composing views, that the Chorus restores to us our freedom, which would else be lost in the tempest. The characters of the drama need this intermission in order to collect themselves; for they are no real beings who obey the impulse of the moment, and merely represent individuals—but ideal persons and representatives of their species, who enunciate the deep things of Humanity.

Thus much on my attempt to revive the old Chorus on the tragic stage.

It is true that choruses are not unknown to modern tragedy; but the Chorus of the Greek drama, as I have employed it—the Chorus, as a single ideal person, furthering and accompanying the whole plot—is of an entirely distinct character; and when, in discussion on the Greek tragedy, I hear mention made of choruses, I generally suspect the speaker's ignorance of his subject. In my view the Chorus has never been reproduced since the decline of the old tragedy.

I have divided it into two parts, and represented it in contest with itself; but this occurs where it acts as a real person, and as an unthinking multitude. As Chorus and an ideal person it is always one and entire. I have also several times dispensed with its presence on the stage. For this liberty I have the example of Æschylus, the creator of tragedy, and Sophocles, the greatest master of his art.

Another licence it may be more difficult to excuse. I have blended together the Christian Religion and the Pagan Mythology, and introduced recollections of the Moorish superstition. But the scene of the drama is Messina—where these three religions either exercised a living influence, or appealed to the senses in monumental remains. Besides, I consider it a privilege of poetry to deal with different religions as a collective whole, in which every thing that bears an individual character, and expresses a peculiar mode of feeling, has its place. Religion itself, the idea of a Divine Power, lies under the veil of all religions; and it must be permitted to the poet to represent it in the form which appears the most appropriate to his subject.

THE BRIDE OF MESSINA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ISABELLA, *Princess of Messina.*
DON MANUEL } *her Sons.*
DON CÆSAR }
BEATRICE.
DIEGO, *an ancient Servant.*
MESSENGERS.
THE ELDERS OF MESSINA, *mute.*
THE CHORUS, *consisting of the Followers of the two Princes.*

SCENE I.

A spacious hall, supported on columns, with entrances on both sides; at the back of the stage a large folding-door leading to a chapel.

DONNA ISABELLA, *in mourning; the* ELDERS OF MESSINA.

ISAB. Forth from my silent chamber's deep recesses,
Grey Fathers of the State, unwillingly
I come; and, shrinking from your gaze, uplift
The veil that shades my widowed brows:—the light
And glory of my days is fled for ever!
And best in solitude and kindred gloom
To hide these sable weeds, this grief-worn frame,
Beseems the mourner's heart. A mighty voice
Inexorable—duty's stern command,
Calls me to life again.——
Not twice the moon
Has filled her orb, since to the tomb ye bore
My princely spouse, your city's lord, whose arm
Against a world of envious foes around
Hurled fierce defiance! Still his spirit lives
In his heroic sons, their country's pride:—
Ye marked how sweetly from their childhood's bloom
They grew in joyous promise to the years
Of manhood's strength;—yet in their secret hearts,
From some mysterious root accurs'd, upsprung
Unmitigable deadly hate, that spurned
All kindred ties, all youthful fond affections,

Still ripening with their thoughtful age;—not mine
The sweet accord of family bliss; tho' each
Awoke a mother's rapture; each alike
Smiled at my nourishing breast! for me alone
Yet lives one mutual thought, of children's love,
In these tempestuous souls dissevered else
By mortal strife and thirst of fierce revenge.
While yet their father reigned, his stern control
Tamed their hot spirits, and with iron yoke
To awful justice bowed their stubborn will:
Obedient to his voice, to outward seeming
They calmed their wrathful mood, nor in array
Ere met, of hostile arms;—yet unappeased
Sat brooding malice in their bosoms' depths;—
They little reck of hidden springs, whose power
Can quell the torrent's fury:—Scarce their sire
In death had closed his eyes, when, as the spark,
That long in smouldering embers sullen lay,
Shoots forth a towering flame;—so unconfined
Burst the wild storm of brothers' hate, triumphant
O'er nature's holiest bands. Ye saw, my friends,
Your country's bleeding wounds, when princely strife
Woke discord's maddening fires, and ranged her sons
In mutual deadly conflict;—all around
Was heard the clash of arms, the din of carnage,
And e'en these halls were stained with kindred gore.
Torn was the state with civil rage, this heart
With pangs that mothers feel; alas! unmindful
Of aught but public woes, and pitiless,
You sought my widow's chamber—there with taunts
And fierce reproaches for your country's ills
From that polluted spring of brother's hate
Derived, invoked a parent's warning voice!
And threatening told of people's discontent
And princes' crimes! "Ill fated land! now wasted
By thy unnatural sons, ere long the prey
Of foeman's sword! Oh haste," you cried, "and end
This strife! bring peace again, or soon Messina
Shall bow to other lords." Your stern decree
Prevailed; this heart, with all a mother's anguish
O'erlaboured, owned the weight of public cares.

I flew, and at my children's feet distracted
A suppliant lay; till to my prayers and tears
The voice of nature answered in their breasts!
Here in the palace of their sires, unarmed,
In peaceful guise, Messina shall behold
The long inveterate foes;—this is the day!
E'en now I wait the messenger that brings
The tidings of my sons' approach: be ready
To give your princes joyful welcome home;
For dire their strife—so from this glad accord,
With thousand blessings on our happy land,
Fair Peace shall smile.

[*The* ELDERS *retire in silence; she beckons to an old attendant who remains.*

ISABELLA. Diego!

DIEGO. Honoured mistress!

ISAB. Old faithful servant, thou true heart, come near me;
Sharer of all a mother's woes, be thine
The sweet communion of her joys:—my treasure
Shrined in thy heart, my dear and holy secret,
Shall pierce the envious veil, and shine triumphant
To cheerful day; too long by harsh decrees,
Silent and overpowered, affection yet
Shall utterance find in nature's tones of rapture!
And this unprisoned heart leap to the embrace
Of all it holds most dear, returned to glad
My desolate halls;—
So bend thy aged steps
To the old cloistered Sanctuary that guards
The darling of my soul, whose innocence
To thy true love—(sweet pledge of happier days!)
Trusting I gave, and asked from fortune's storm
A resting place and shrine: O in this hour
Of bliss, the dear reward of all thy cares.
Give to my longing arms my child again!

[*Trumpets are heard in the distance.*

Haste! be thy footsteps winged with joy—I hear
The trumpet's blast, that tells in warlike accents,
My sons are near:—

[*Exit* DIEGO. *Music is heard in an opposite direction and becomes gradually louder.*

Messina is awake!
Hark! how the stream of tongues hoarse murmuring
Rolls on the breeze,—'tis they! my mother's heart
Feels their approach, and beats with mighty throes
Responsive to the loud resounding march!
They come! they come! my children! oh, my children!
[*Exit.*

The CHORUS *enters.*

It consists of two semichoruses which enter at the same time from opposite sides, and after marching round the stage range themselves in rows, each on the side by which it entered. One semichorus consists of young knights, the other of older ones, each has its peculiar costume and ensigns. When the two choruses stand opposite to each other, the march ceases, and the two leaders speak.*

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

I greet ye, glittering halls
Of olden time!
Cradle of kings! Hail! lordly roof,
In pillared majesty sublime!
Sheathed be the sword!
In chains before the portal lies
The fiend with tresses snake-entwined,
Fell Discord!—Gently tread the inviolate floor!
Peace to this royal dome!
Thus by the Furies' brood we swore.
And all the dark avenging Deities!

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).

I rage! I burn! and scarce refrain
To lift the glittering steel on high,
For lo! the Gorgon-visaged train
Of the detested foeman nigh:—
Shall I my swelling heart control?—
To parley deign—or still in mortal strife
The tumult of my soul?

* The first chorus consists of Cajetan, Berengar, Manfred, Tristan, and eight followers of Don Manuel. The second of Bohemund, Roger, Hippolyte, and nine others of the party of Don Cæsar.

Dire Sister, guardian of the spot, to thee
Awe-struck I bend the knee,
Nor dare with arms profane thy deep tranquillity!

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

Welcome the peaceful strain!
Together we adore the guardian power
Of these august abodes!—
Sacred the hour
To kindred brotherly ties
And reverend holy sympathies;—
Our hearts the genial charm shall own,
And melt awhile at friendship's soothing tone:—
But when in yonder plain
We meet—then peace away!
Come gleaming arms, and battle's deadly fray!

The whole Chorus.

But when in yonder plain
We meet—then peace away!
Come gleaming arms, and battle's deadly fray!

First Chorus (BERENGAR).

I hate thee not—nor call thee foe,
My brother! this our native earth,
The land that gave our fathers birth:—
Of chief's behest the slave decreed,
The vassal draws the sword at need,
For chieftain's rage we strike the blow,
For stranger lords our kindred blood must flow

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Hate fires their souls—we ask not why;—
At honour's call to fight and die,
Boast of the true and brave!
Unworthy of a soldier's name
Who burns not for his chieftain's fame!

The whole Chorus.

Unworthy of a soldier's name
Who burns not for his chieftain's fame!

One of the Chorus (BERENGAR).

Thus spoke within my bosom's core
The thought—as hitherward I strayed;
And pensive 'mid the waving store,
I mused, of Autumn's yellow glade:—
These gifts of Nature's bounteous reign,—
The teeming earth, and golden grain,
Yon elms, among whose leaves entwine
The tendrils of the clustering vine;—
Gay children of our sunny clime,—
Region of Spring's eternal prime!—
Each charm should woo to love and joy,
No cares the dream of bliss annoy,
And Pleasure through life's summer day
Speed every laughing Hour away.
We rage in blood,—O dire disgrace!
For this usurping, alien race;
From some far distant land they came,
Beyond the sun's departing flame.
And owned upon our friendly shore
The welcome of our sires of yore.
Alas! their sons in thraldom pine,
The vassals of this stranger line.

A second (MANFRED).

Yes! pleased, on our land, from his azure way,
The Sun ever smiles with unclouded ray.
But never, fair isle, shall thy sons repose
'Mid the sweets which the faithless waves enclose.
On their bosom they wafted the corsair bold,
With his dreaded barks to our coast of old.
For thee was thy dower of beauty vain,
'Twas the treasure that lured the spoiler's train.
Oh, ne'er from these smiling vales shall rise
A sword for our vanquished liberties;
'Tis not where the laughing Ceres reigns,
And the jocund lord of the flowery plains:—
Where the iron lies hid in the mountain cave,
Is the cradle of Empire—the home of the brave!

[*The folding-doors at the back of the stage are thrown open.* DONNA ISABELLA *appears between her sons,* DON MANUEL *and* DON CÆSAR.

Both Choruses (CAJETAN).

Lift high the notes of praise!
Behold! where like the awakening Sun,
She comes, and from her queenly brow
Shoots glad-inspiring rays.
Mistress, we bend to thee!

First Chorus.

Fair is the moon amid the starry quire
That twinkle o'er the sky,
Shining in silvery mild tranquillity;—
The mother with her sons more fair!
See! blooming at her side,
She leads the youthful royal pair;
With gentle grace, and soft maternal pride,
Attempering sweet their manly fire.

Second Chorus (BERENGAR).

From this fair stem a beauteous tree
With ever springing boughs shall smile,
And with immortal verdure shade our isle;
Mother of heroes, joy to thee!
Triumphant as the sun thy kingly race
Shall spread from clime to clime,
And give a deathless name to rolling time!

ISABELLA (*comes forward with her* SONS).

Look down! benignant Queen of Heaven, and still
This proud tumultuous heart, that in my breast
Swells with a mother's tide of ecstasy,
As blazoned in these noble youths, my image
More perfect shows;—O blissful hour! the first
That comprehends the fulness of my joy,
When long constrained affection dares to pour
In unison of transport from my heart
Unchecked, a parent's undivided love:
Oh! it was ever one—my sons were twain.
Say—shall I revel in the dream of bliss,
And give my soul to nature's dear emotions?
Is this warm pressure of thy brother's hand
A dagger in thy breast? [*To* DON MANUEL.
Or when my eyes
Feed on that brow with love's enraptured gaze,

Is it a wrong to thee? . . . [*To* Don Cæsar.
Trembling, I pause,
Lest e'en affection's breath should wake the fires
Of slumbering hate.
[*After regarding both with inquiring looks*
Speak! In your secret hearts
What purpose dwells? Is it the ancient feud
Unreconciled, that in your father's halls
A moment stilled; beyond the castle gates,
Where sits infuriate War, and champs the bit—
Shall rage anew in mortal bloody conflict?

Chorus (Bohemund).

Concord or strife—the Fates' decree
Is bosomed yet in dark futurity!—
What comes, we little heed to know.
Prepared for aught the hour may show!

Isabella (*looking round*).

What mean these arms? this warlike dread array,
That in the palace of your sires portends
Some fearful issue? needs a mother's heart
Outpoured, this rugged witness of her joys?
Say, in these folding arms shall Treason hide
The deadly snare?—O these rude pitiless men,
The ministers of your wrath!—trust not the show
Of seeming friendship; treachery in their breasts
Lurks to betray, and long-dissembled hate.
Ye are a race of other lands; your sires
Profaned their soil; and ne'er the invader's yoke
Was easy—never in the vassal's heart
Languished the hope of sweet revenge;—our sway
Not rooted in a people's love, but owns
Allegiance from their fears; with secret joy—
For conquest's ruthless sword, and thraldom's chains
From age to age, they wait the atoning hour
Of princes' downfal;—thus their bards awake
The patriot strain, and thus from sire to son
Rehearsed, the old traditionary tale
Beguiles the winter's night. False is the world,
My sons, and light are all the specious ties
By Fancy twined: Friendship—deceitful name!

Its gaudy flowers but deck our summer fortune,
To wither at the first rude breath of autumn!
So happy to whom Heaven has given a brother;
The friend by nature signed—the true and steadfast!
Nature alone is honest—Nature only—
When all we trusted strews the wintry shore—
On her eternal anchor lies at rest,
Nor heeds the tempest's rage.

DON MANUEL. My mother!

DON CÆSAR. Hear me!

ISABELLA (*taking their hands*).

Be noble, and forget the fancied wrongs
Of boyhood's age: more godlike is forgiveness
Than victory, and in your father's grave
Should sleep the ancient hate:—Oh, give your days
Renewed henceforth to peace and holy love!

[*She recedes one or two steps, as if to give them space to approach each other. Both fix their eyes on the ground without regarding one another.*

ISABELLA (*after awaiting for some time, with suppressed emotion, a demonstration on the part of her sons*).

I can no more; my prayers—my tears are vain:—
'Tis well! obey the demon in your hearts!
Fulfil your dread intent, and stain with blood
The holy altars of our household Gods;—
These halls, that gave you birth, the stage where Murder
Shall hold his festival of mutual carnage
Beneath a mother's eye!—then, foot to foot,
Close, like the Theban pair, with maddening gripe,
And fold each other in a last embrace!
Each press with vengeful thrust the dagger home,
And "Victory!" be your shriek of death:—Nor then
Shall discord rest appeased; the very flame
That lights your funeral pyre, shall tower dissevered
In ruddy columns to the skies, and tell
With horrid image—"thus they lived and died!"

[*She goes away; the* BROTHERS *stand as before.*

Chorus (CAJETAN).

How have her words with soft control
Resistless calmed the tempest of my soul!

No guilt of kindred blood be mine!
Thus with uplifted hands I pray:
Think, brothers, on the awful day,
And tremble at the wrath divine!

DON CÆSAR (*without taking his eyes from the ground*).
Thou art my elder—speak—without dishonour
I yield to thee.

DON MANUEL. One gracious word, and instant,
My tongue is rival in the strife of love!

DON C. I am the guiltier—weaker—

DON MANUEL. Say not so!
Who doubts thy noble heart, knows thee not well;
Thy words were prouder, if thy soul were mean

DON C. It burns indignant at the thought of wrong;—
But thou—methinks, in passion's fiercest mood,
'Twas aught but scorn that harboured in thy breast.

DON M. Oh! had I known thy spirit thus to peace
Inclined, what thousand griefs had never torn
A mother's heart!

DON CÆSAR. I find thee just and true:
Men spoke thee proud of soul.

DON MANUEL. The curse of greatness!—
Ears ever open to the babbler's tale.

DON C. Thou art too proud to meanness—I to falsehood!

DON M. We were deceived, betrayed!

DON CÆSAR. The sport of frenzy!

DON M. And said my mother true, false is the world?

DON C. Believe her, false as air.

DON MANUEL. Give me thy hand!

DON C. And thine be ever next my heart!

[*They stand clasping each other's hands, and regard each other in silence.*

DON MANUEL. I gaze
Upon thy brow, and still behold my mother
In some dear lineament.

DON CÆSAR. Her image looks
From thine, and wondrous in my bosom wakes
Affection's springs.

DON MANUEL. And is it thou?—that smile
Benignant on thy face?—thy lips that charm
With gracious sounds of love and dear forgiveness?

DON C. Is this my brother, this the hated foe?

His mien all gentleness and truth—his voice—
Whose soft prevailing accents breathe of friendship!
[*After a pause.*

DON M. Shall aught divide us?
DON CÆSAR. We are one for ever!
[*They rush into each other's arms.*

1ST CHORUS (*to the Second*).
Why stand we thus, and coldly gaze,
While Nature's holy transports burn?
No dear embrace of happier days
The pledge—that discord never shall return!
Brothers are they by kindred band;
We own the ties of home and native land.
[*Both* CHORUSES *embrace.*

A MESSENGER *enters.*

2ND CHORUS *to* DON CÆSAR (BOHEMUND).
Rejoice, my Prince, thy messenger returns:—
And mark that beaming smile! the harbinger
Of happy tidings.
MESSENGER. Health to me, and health
To this delivered state! O sight of bliss,
That lights mine eyes with rapture! I behold—
Their hands in sweet accord entwined—the sons
Of my departed lord—the princely pair
Dissevered late by conflict's hottest rage.
DON C. Yes! from the flames of hate, a new-born Phœnix,
Our love aspires!
MESSENGER. I bring another joy—
My staff is green with flourishing shoots.
DON CÆSAR (*taking him aside*). O, tell me
Thy gladsome message.
MESSENGER. All is happiness
On this auspicious day;—long sought, the lost one
Is found.
DON CÆSAR. Discovered! Oh, where is she? Speak!
MESS. Within Messina's walls she lies concealed.
DON MANUEL (*turning to the* 1ST SEMICHORUS).
A ruddy glow mounts in my brother's cheek,
And pleasure dances in his sparkling eye;

Whate'er the spring, with sympathy of love
My inmost heart partakes his joy.

DON CÆSAR (*to the* MESSENGER). Come, lead me;
Farewell, Don Manuel—to meet again
Enfolded in a mother's arms! I fly
To cares of utmost need. [*He is about to depart.*

DON MANUEL. Make no delay;
And happiness attend thee!

DON CÆSAR (*after a pause of reflection, he returns*).
How thy looks
Awake my soul to transport! Yes, my brother,
We shall be friends indeed! This hour is bright
With glad presage of ever-springing love,
That in the enlivening beam shall flourish fair,
Sweet recompense of wasted years!

DON MANUEL. The blossom
Betokens goodly fruit.

DON CÆSAR. I tear myself
Reluctant from thy arms, but think not less—
If thus I break this festal hour—my heart
Thrills with a holy joy.

DON MANUEL (*with manifest absence of mind*).
Obey the moment!
Our lives belong to love.

DON CÆSAR. What calls me hence—

DON M. Enough! thou leav'st thy heart.

DON CÆSAR. No envious secret
Shall part us long; soon the last darkening fold
Shall vanish from my breast.
[*Turning to the* CHORUS.
Attend! For ever
Stilled is our strife; he is my deadliest foe,
Detested as the gates of hell, who dares
To blow the fires of discord:—none may hope
To win my love, that with malicious tales
Encroach upon a brother's ear, and point,
With busy zeal of false officious friendship,
The dart of some rash angry word, escaped
From passion's heat:—it wounds not from the lips,
But swallowed by suspicion's greedy ear,
Like a rank poisonous weed, embittered creeps,

And hangs about the heart with thousand shoots,
Perplexing Nature's ties.

[*He embraces his brother again, and goes away, accompanied by the* 2ND CHORUS.

Chorus (CAJETAN). Wondering, my Prince,
I gaze, for in thy looks some mystery
Strange-seeming shows: scarce with abstracted mien
And cold thou answered'st, when with earnest heart
Thy brother poured the strain of dear affection.
As in a dream thou stand'st, and lost in thought,
As tho'—dissevered from its earthly frame—
Thy spirit roved afar. Not thine the breast
That deaf to Nature's voice, ne'er owned the throbs
Of kindred love:—nay more—like one entranced
In bliss, thou look'st around, and smiles of rapture
Play on thy cheek.

DON MANUEL. How shall my lips declare
The transports of my swelling heart? My brother
Revels in glad surprise, and from his breast
Instinct with strange newfelt emotions, pours
The tide of joy; but mine—no hate came with me,
Forgot the very spring of mutual strife!
High o'er this earthly sphere, on rapture's wings,
My spirit floats; and in the azure sea,
Above—beneath—no track of envious night
Disturbs the deep serene! I view these halls,
And picture to my thoughts the timid joy
Of my sweet bride, as thro' the palace gates,
In pride of queenly state, I lead her home.
She loved alone the loving one, the stranger,
And little deems that on her beauteous brow
Messina's prince shall 'twine the nuptial wreath.
How sweet, with unexpected pomp of greatness,
To glad the darling of my soul!—too long
I brook this dull delay of crowning bliss!
Her beauty's self, that asks no borrow'd charm,
Shall shine refulgent, like the diamond's blaze
That wins new lustre from the circling gold!

Chorus (CAJETAN).
Long have I marked thee, Prince, with curious eye,
Foreboding of some mystery deep enshrined

Within thy labouring breast. This day, impatient,
Thy lips have burst the seal; and unconstrained
Confess a lover's joy;—the gladdening chase,
The Olympian coursers, and the falcon's flight,
Can charm no more:—soon as the sun declines
Beneath the ruddy west, thou hiest thee quick
To some sequestered path, of mortal eye
Unseen—not one of all our faithful train
Companion of thy solitary way.
Say, why so long concealed the blissful flame?
Stranger to fear—ill-brooked thy princely heart
One thought unuttered.

DON MANUEL. Ever on the wing
Is mortal joy;—with silence best we guard
The fickle good;—but now, so near the goal
Of all my cherished hopes, I dare to speak.
To-morrow's sun shall see her mine! no power
Of Hell can make us twain! With timid stealth
No longer will I creep at dusky eve,
To taste the golden fruits of Cupid's tree,
And snatch a fearful, fleeting bliss: to-day
With bright to-morrow shall be one! So smooth
As runs the limpid brook, or silvery sand
That marks the flight of time, our lives shall flow
In continuity of joy!

Chorus (CAJETAN). Already
Our hearts, my Prince, with silent vows have blessed
Thy happy love; and now from every tongue,
For her—the royal beauteous bride—should sound
The glad acclaim; so tell what nook unseen,
What deep umbrageous solitude, enshrines
The charmer of thy heart? With magic spells
Almost I deem she mocks our gaze, for oft
In eager chase we scour each rustic path
And forest dell; yet not a trace betrayed
The lover's haunts, ne'er were the footsteps marked
Of this mysterious fair.

DON MANUEL. The spell is broke!
And all shall be revealed: now list my tale:—
'Tis five months flown,—my father yet controlled
The land, and bowed our necks with iron sway;

Little I knew, but the wild joys of arms,
And mimic warfare of the chase;——
One day,—
Long had we tracked the boar with zealous toil
On yonder woody ridge:—it chanced, pursuing
A snow-white hind, far from your train I roved
Amid the forest maze;—the timid beast,
Along the windings of the narrow vale,
Thro' rocky cleft and thick-entangled brake,
Flew onward, scarce a moment lost, nor distant
Beyond a javelin's throw; nearer I came not,
Nor took an aim; when thro' a garden's gate,
Sudden she vanished:—from my horse quick springing,
I followed:—lo! the poor scared creature lay
Stretched at the feet of a young beauteous nun,
That strove with fond caress of her fair hands
To still its throbbing heart: wondering, I gazed,
And motionless—my spear, in act to strike,
High poised—while she, with her large piteous eyes
For mercy sued—and thus we stood in silence,
Regarding one another. . . .
How long the pause
I know not—time itself forgot;—it seemed
Eternity of bliss: her glance of sweetness
Flew to my soul; and quick the subtle flame
Pervaded all my heart:——
But what I spoke,
And how this blessed creature answered, none
May ask; it floats upon my thought, a dream
Of childhood's happy dawn! Soon as my sense
Returned, I felt her bosom throb responsive
To mine,—then fell melodious on my ear
The sound, as of a convent bell, that called
To vesper Song; and like some shadowy vision
That melts in air—she flitted from my sight—
And was beheld no more.

Chorus (CAJETAN). Thy story thrills
My breast with pious awe! Prince, thou hast robbed
The sanctuary, and for the bride of Heaven

Burned with unholy passion! Oh, remember
The cloister's sacred vows!

DON MANUEL. Thenceforth one path
My footsteps wooed; the fickle train was still
Of young desires—new felt my being's aim,
My soul revealed!—and as the pilgrim turns
His wistful gaze, where, from the orient sky,
With gracious lustre beams Redemption's star;—
So to that brightest point of Heaven, her presence,
My hopes and longings centered all. No sun
Sank in the western waves, but smiled farewell
To two united lovers:—thus in stillness
Our hearts were twined,—the all-seeing air above us
Alone the faithful witness of our joys!
O golden hours! O happy days! nor Heaven
Indignant viewed our bliss;—no vows enchained
Her spotless soul; nought but the link which bound it
Eternally to mine!

Chorus (CAJETAN). Those hallowed walls,
Perchance the calm retreat of tender youth,
No living grave?

DON MANUEL. In infant innocence
Consigned a holy pledge, ne'er has she left
Her cloistered home.

Chorus (CAJETAN). But what her royal line?
The noble only spring from noble stem.

DON M. A secret to herself,—she ne'er has learned
Her name or Fatherland.

Chorus (CAJETAN). And not a trace
Guides to her being's undiscovered springs?

DON M. An old domestic, the sole messenger
Sent by her unknown mother, oft bespeaks her
Of kingly race.

Chorus (CAJETAN). And hast thou won nought else
From garrulous age?

DON MANUEL. Too much I feared to peril
My secret bliss!

Chorus (CAJETAN). What were his words? What tidings
He bore—perchance thou know'st.

DON MANUEL. Oft he has cheered her

With promise of a happier time, when all
Shall be revealed.

Chorus (CAJETAN). O say—betokens aught
The time is near?

DON MANUEL. Not distant far the day
That to the arms of kindred love once more
Shall give the long forsaken, orphaned maid—
Thus with mysterious words the aged man
Has shadowed oft what most I dread—for augur
Of change disturbs the soul supremely blest:
Nay, more; but yesterday his message spoke
The end of all my joys:—this very dawn,
He told, should smile auspicious on her fate,
And light to other scenes:—no precious hour
Delayed my quick resolves—by night I bore her
In secret to Messina.

Chorus (CAJETAN). Rash the deed
Of sacrilegious spoil! forgive, my Prince,
The bold rebuke; thus to unthinking youth
Old age may speak in friendship's warning voice.

DON M. Hard by the convent of the Carmelites,
In a sequestered garden's tranquil bound,
And safe from curious eyes, I left her,—hastening
To meet my brother: trembling there she counts
The slow-paced hours, nor deems how soon triumphant
In queenly state, high on the throne of Fame
Messina shall behold my timid bride.
For next, encompassed by your knightly train,
With pomp of greatness in the festal show,
Her lover's form shall meet her wondering gaze!
Thus will I lead her to my mother; thus—
While countless thousands on her passage wait
Amid the loud acclaim—the royal bride
Shall reach my palace gates!

Chorus (CAJETAN). Command us, Prince,
We live but to obey!

DON MANUEL. I tore myself
Reluctant from her arms; my every thought
Shall still be hers: so come along, my friends,
To where the turbaned merchant spreads his store
Of fabrics gold enwrought with curious art;

And all the gathered wealth of eastern climes.
First choose the well-formed sandals—meet to guard
And grace her delicate feet; then for her robe—
The tissue, pure as Etna's snow that lies
Nearest the sun—light as the wreathy mist
At summer dawn—so playful let it float
About her airy limbs. A girdle next,
Purple with gold embroidered o'er, to bind
With witching grace the tunic that confines
Her bosom's swelling charms: of silk the mantle,
Gorgeous with like empurpled hues, and fixed
With clasp of gold:—remember, too, the bracelets
To gird her beauteous arms; nor leave the treasure
Of Ocean's pearly deeps and coral caves.
About her locks entwine a diadem
Of purest gems—the ruby's fiery glow
Commingling with the emerald's green. A veil,
From her tiara pendent to her feet
Like a bright fleecy cloud shall circle round
Her slender form: and let a myrtle wreath
Crown the enchanting whole!

Chorus (Cajetan). We haste, my Prince,
Amid the Bàzar's glittering rows, to cull
Each rich adornment.

Don Manuel. From my stables lead
A palfrey, milkwhite as the steeds that draw
The chariot of the Sun; purple the housings,
The bridle sparkling o'er with precious gems,
For it shall bear my Queen! Yourselves be ready
With trumpet's cheerful clang, in martial train
To lead your mistress home: let two attend me,
The rest await my quick return; and each
Guard well my secret purpose.

[*He goes away accompanied by two of the Chorus.*

Chorus (Cajetan).

The princely strife is o'er, and say,
What sport shall wing the slow-paced hours,
And cheat the tedious day?
With hope and fear's enlivening zest
Disturb the slumber of the breast,

And wake life's dull untroubled sea
With freshening airs of gay variety.

One of the Chorus (MANFRED).
Lovely is Peace! A beauteous boy,
Couched listless by the rivulet's glassy tide,
'Mid Nature's tranquil scene,
He views the lambs that skip with innocent joy,
And crop the meadow's flowering pride:—
Then with his flute's enchanting sound,
He wakes the mountain echoes round,
Or slumbers in the sunset's ruddy sheen,
Lulled by the murmuring melody.
But War for me! my spirit's treasure,
Its stern delight, and wilder pleasure:
I love the peril and the pain,
And revel in the surge of Fortune's boisterous main!

A second (BERENGAR).
Is there not Love, and beauty's smile
That lures with soft resistless wile?
'Tis thrilling hope! 'tis rapturous fear
'Tis Heaven upon this mortal sphere;
When at her feet we bend the knee,
And own the glance of kindred ecstasy!
For ever on life's chequered way,
'Tis Love that tints the darkening hues of care
With soft benignant ray:
The mirthful daughter of the wave,
Celestial Venus ever fair,
Enchants our happy spring with Fancy's gleam,
And wakes the airy forms of Passion's golden dream.

First (MANFRED).
To the wild woods away!
Quick let us follow in the train
Of her, chaste Huntress of the silver bow;
And from the rocks amain
Track through the forest gloom the bounding roe
The war God's merry bride,
The chase recals the battle's fray,
And kindles victory's pride:—

Up with the streaks of early morn,
We scour with jocund hearts the misty vale,
Loud echoing to the cheerful horn—
Over mountain—over dale—
And every languid sense repair,
Bathed in the rushing streams of cold reviving air.

Second (BERENGAR).

Or shall we trust the ever-moving sea,
The azure Goddess, blithe and free,
Whose face, the mirror of the cloudless sky,
Lures to her bosom wooingly?
Quick let us build on the dancing waves
A floating castle gay,
And merrily, merrily, swim away!
Who ploughs, with venturous keel, the brine
Of the ocean chrystalline—
His bride is Fortune, the world his own,
For him a harvest blooms unsown:—
Here, like the wind that swift careers
The circling bound of earth and sky,
Flits ever changeful Destiny!
Of airy Chance 'tis the sportive reign,
And Hope ever broods on the boundless main!

A third (CAJETAN).

Nor on the watery waste alone
Of the tumultuous heaving sea;—
On the firm earth that sleeps secure,
Based on the pillars of eternity.
Say, when shall mortal joy endure?
New bodings in my anxious breast,
Waked by this sudden friendship, rise;
Ne'er would I choose my home of rest
On the stilled lava stream, that cold
Beneath the mountain lies:—
Not thus was Discord's flame controlled—
Too deep the rooted hate—too long
They brooded in their sullen hearts
O'er unforgotten treasured wrong.
In warning visions oft dismayed,
I read the signs of coming woe;

And now, from this mysterious maid,
My bosom tells the dreaded ills shall flow:—
Unblest, I deem, the bridal chain
Shall knit their secret loves, accurst
With holy cloisters' spoil profane.
No crooked paths to Virtue lead;
Ill fruit has ever sprung from evil seed!

BERENGAR.

And thus to sad unhallowed rites
Of an ill-omened nuptial tie,
Too well ye know their father bore
A bride of mournful destiny,
Torn from his sire, whose awful curse has sped
Heaven's vengeance on the impious bed!
This fierce unnatural rage atones
A parent's crime—decreed by Fate,
Their mother's offspring, Strife and Hate!

The scene changes to a garden opening on the sea.

BEATRICE (*steps forward from an alcove. She walks to and fro with an agitated air, looking round in every direction. Suddenly she stands still and listens*).

No! 'tis not he: 'twas but the playful wind
Rustling the pine tops. To his ocean bed
The sun declines, and with o'erwearied heart
I count the lagging hours: an icy chill
Creeps through my frame; the very solitude
And awful silence fright my trembling soul!
Where'er I turn, nought meets my gaze—he leaves me
Forsaken and alone!——
And like a rushing stream the city's hum
Floats on the breeze, and dull the mighty sea
Rolls murmuring to the rocks: I shrink to nothing,
With horrors compassed round; and like the leaf,
Borne on the autumn blast, am hurried onward
Thro' boundless space.——
Alas! that e'er I left
My peaceful cell—no cares, no fond desires
Disturbed my breast, unruffled as the stream
That glides in sunshine through the verdant mead;—

Nor poor in joys. Now—on the mighty surge
Of Fortune, tempest-tossed—the world enfolds me
With giant arms! Forgot my childhood's ties,
I listened to the lover's flattering tale—
Listened, and trusted! From the sacred dome
Allured—betrayed—for sure some hell-born magic
Enchained my frenzied sense—I fled with him,
The invader of Religion's dread abodes!

Where art thou, my beloved? Haste—return—
With thy dear presence calm my struggling soul!
[*She listens.*
Hark! the sweet voice! No! 'twas the echoing surge
That beats upon the shore;—alas! he comes not.
More faintly, o'er the distant waves, the sun
Gleams with expiring ray; a deathlike shudder
Creeps to my heart, and sadder, drearier grows
E'en desolation's self.
[*She walks to and fro, then listens again*
Yes! from the thicket shade
A voice resounds!—'tis he!—the loved one!
No fond illusion mocks my listening ear:
'Tis louder—nearer: to his arms I fly—
To his breast!
[*She rushes with outstretched arms to the extremity of the garden.* DON CÆSAR *meets her.*

DON CÆSAR. BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*starting back in horror*).
What do I see?
[*At the same moment the Chorus comes forward.*
DON CÆSAR. Angelic sweetness! fear not.
[*To the Chorus.*
Retire! your gleaming arms and rude array
Affright the timorous maid. [*To* BEATRICE.
Fear nothing!—beauty
And virgin shame are sacred in my eyes.
[*The Chorus steps aside. He approaches and takes her hand.*
Where hast thou been? for sure some envious power
Has hid thee from my gaze: long have I sought thee:

E'en from the hour when, 'mid the funeral rites
Of the dead Prince, like some angelic vision,
Lit with celestial brightness, on my sight
Thou shon'st, no other image in my breast,
Waking or dreaming, lives;—nor to thyself
Unknown thy potent spells; my glance of fire,
My faltering accents, and my hand that lay
Trembling in thine, bespoke my ecstasy!
Aught else with solemn majesty the rite
And holy place forbade:——
The bell proclaimed
The awful Sacrifice! With downcast eyes,
And kneeling, I adored:—soon as I rose,
And caught with eager gaze thy form again,
Sudden it vanished; yet, with mighty magic
Of love enchained, my spirit tracked thy presence;
Nor ever, with unwearied quest, I cease,
At palace gates, amid the temple's throng,
In secret paths retired, or public scenes,
Where beauteous innocence perchance might rove,
To mark each passing form—in vain: but, guided
By some propitious deity, this day
One of my train, with happy vigilance,
Espied thee in the neighbouring church.

[BEATRICE, *who had stood trembling, with averted eyes, here makes a gesture of terror.*

I see thee
Once more; and may the spirit from this frame
Be severed e'er we part! Now let me snatch
This glad auspicious moment, and defy
Or chance, or envious demon's power, to shake
Henceforth my solid bliss; here I proclaim thee,
Before this listening warlike train, my bride,
With pledge of knightly honours!

[*He shows her to the Chorus.*

Who thou art,
I ask not: thou art mine! But that thy soul
And birth are pure alike, one glance informed
My inmost heart; and though thy lot were mean,
And poor thy lowly state, yet would I strain thee
With rapture to my arms:—no choice remains,

Thou art my love—my wife! Know too, that lifted
On fortune's height, I spurn control; my will
Can raise thee to the pinnacle of greatness:—
Enough my name—I am Don Cæsar! None
Is nobler in Messina!

[BEATRICE *starts back in amazement. He remarks her agitation, and after a pause continues.*

What a grace
Lives in thy soft surprise and modest silence!
Yes! gentle humbleness is beauty's crown—
The Beautiful for ever hid, and shrinking
From its own lustre: but thy spirit needs
Repose, for aught of strange—e'en sudden joy—
Is terror-fraught. I leave thee—

[*Turning to the Chorus.*

From this hour
She is your mistress, and my bride; so teach her,
With honours due, to entertain the pomp
Of queenly state. I will return with speed,
And lead her home as fits Messina's Princess!

[*He goes away.*

BEATRICE *and the Chorus.*

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Fair maiden—hail to thee,
Thou lovely Queen!
Thine is the crown, and thine the victory!
Of heroes, to a distant age,
The blooming mother thou shalt shine,
Preserver of this kingly line.

(ROGER).

And thrice I bid thee hail,
Thou happy fair!
Sent in auspicious hour to bless
This favoured race—the gods' peculiar care.
Here twine the immortal wreaths of Fame,
And evermore, from sire to son,
Rolls on the sceptered sway,
To heirs of old renown, a race of deathless name!

(Bohemund).

The household Gods exultingly
Thy coming wait;
The ancient, honoured Sires,
That on the portals frown sedate,
Shall smile for thee!
There blooming Hebe shall thy steps attend,
And golden Victory, that sits
By Jove's eternal throne, with waving plumes,
For conquest ever spread,
To welcome thee from Heaven descend.

(Roger).

Ne'er from this queenly bright array
The crown of beauty fades,—
Departing to the realms of day,
Each to the next, as good and fair,
Extends the zone of feminine grace,
And veil of purity:—
O happy race!
What vision glads my raptured eye!
Equal in Nature's blooming pride,
I see the mother and the virgin bride.

Beatrice (*awaking from her reverie*).

O luckless hour!
Alas! ill-fated maid!
Where shall I fly
From these rude warlike men?
Lost and betrayed!
A shudder o'er me came,
When of this race accurst—the brothers twain—
Their hands embrued with kindred gore,
I heard the dreaded name;
Oft told, their strife and serpent hate
With terror thrilled my bosom's core:—
And now—oh hapless fate!—
I tremble, 'mid the rage of discord thrown,
Deserted and alone!

[*She runs into the alcove.*

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Son of the immortal Deities,
And blest is he, the Lord of power;
His every joy the world can give;
Of all that mortals prize
He culls the flower.

(ROGER).

For him from Ocean's azure caves
The diver bears each pearl of purest ray,
Whate'er from Nature's boundless field,
Or toil or art has won,
Obsequious at his feet we lay;
His choice is ever free;
We bow to chance, and Fortune's blind decree.

(BOHEMUND).

But this of Princes' lot I deem,
The crowning treasure, joy supreme—
Of love the triumph and the prize,
The beauty, star of neighbouring eyes!
She blooms for him alone,
He calls the fairest maid his own.

(ROGER).

Armed for the deadly fray,
The corsair bounds upon the strand,
And drags, amid the gloom of night, away,
The shrieking captive train,
Of wild desires the hapless prey:
But ne'er his lawless hands profane
The gem—the peerless flower—
Whose charms shall deck the Sultan's bower.

(BOHEMUND).

Now haste and watch, with curious eye,
These hallowed precincts round,
That no presumptuous foot come nigh
The secret, solitary ground:
Guard well the maiden fair,
Your chieftain's brightest jewel owns your care.

[*The Chorus withdraws to the background.*

The scene changes to a chamber in the interior of the palace.

DONNA ISABELLA *between* DON MANUEL *and* DON CÆSAR.

ISAB. . The long expected festal day is come,
My children's hearts are twined in one, as thus
I fold their hands. Oh, blissful hour! when first
A mother dares to speak in nature's voice,
And no rude presence checks the tide of love.
The clang of arms affrights mine ear no more:—
And as the owls, ill-omened brood of night,
From some old shattered homestead's ruined walls,
Their ancient reign, fly forth a dusky swarm,
Darkening the cheerful day;—when absent long,
The dwellers home return with joyous shouts,
To build the pile anew;—so Hate departs
With all his grisly train—pale Envy, scowling Malice,
And hollow-eyed Suspicion—from our gates,
Hoarse murmuring, to the realms of night; while Peace,
By Concord and fair Friendship led along,
Comes smiling in his place. [*She pauses.*
But not alone
This day of joy to each restores a brother;
It brings a sister! Wonderstruck you gaze!
Yet now the truth, in silence guarded long,
Bursts from my soul—attend! I have a daughter!
A sister lives, ordained by Heaven to bind ye
With ties unknown before.

DON CÆSAR. We have a sister!
What hast thou said, my mother?—never told
Her being till this hour!

DON MANUEL. In childhood's years,
Oft of a sister we have heard, untimely
Snatched in her cradle by remorseless death;
So ran the tale.

ISABELLA. She lives!

DON CÆSAR. And thou wert silent!

ISAB. . Hear how the seed was sown in early time,
That now shall ripen to a joyful harvest.
Ye bloomed in boyhood's tender age—e'en then—

By mutual deadly hate, the bitter spring
Of grief to this torn anxious heart—dissevered;
Oh, may your strife return no more! A vision,
Strange and mysterious, in your father's breast
Woke dire presage: it seemed that from his couch,
With branches intertwined, two laurels grew,
And in the midst a lily all in flames,
That, catching swift the boughs and knotted stems,
Burst forth with crackling rage, and o'er the house
Spread in one mighty sea of fire: perplexed
By this terrific dream, my husband sought
An Arab, skilled to read the stars, and long
The trusted oracle, whose counsels swayed
His inmost purpose: thus the boding sage
Spoke Fate's decrees;—if I a daughter bore,
Destruction to his sons and all his race
From her should spring. Soon, by Heaven's will, this child
Of dreadful omen saw the light—your sire
Commanded instant in the waves to throw
The new-born innocent; a mother's love
Prevailed, and, aided by a faithful servant,
I snatched the babe from death.

DON CÆSAR. Blest be the hands
The ministers of thy care! O, ever rich
Of counsels was a parent's love!

ISABELLA. But more
Than Nature's mighty voice—a warning dream
Impelled to save my child: while yet unborn
She slumbered in my womb, sleeping I saw
An infant, fair as of celestial kind,
That played upon the grass; soon from the wood
A lion rushed, and from his gory jaws,
Caressing, in the infant's lap let fall
His prey, new-caught; then thro' the air down swept
An eagle, and with fond caress alike
Dropt from his claws a trembling kid; and both
Cowered at the infant's feet, a gentle pair.
A Monk, the saintly guide whose counsels poured,
In every earthly need, the balm of Heaven
Upon my troubled soul, my dream resolved:—

Thus spoke the man of God:—a daughter, sent
To knit the warring spirits of my sons
In bonds of tender love, should recompense
A mother's pains! Deep in my heart I treasured
His words, and, reckless of the Pagan Seer,
Preserved the blessed child—ordained of Heaven
To still your growing strife; sweet pledge of hope
And messenger of peace!

DON MANUEL (*embracing his brother*).

There needs no sister
To join our hearts—she shall but bind them closer.

ISAB. In a lone spot obscure, by stranger hands
Nurtured, the secret flower has grown—to me
Denied the joy to mark each infant charm
And opening grace from that sad hour of parting;—
These arms ne'er clasp'd my child again!—her sire,
To jealousy's corroding fears a prey,
And brooding dark suspicion, restless tracked
Each day my steps.

DON CÆSAR. Yet three months flown, my father
Sleeps in the tranquil grave; say, whence delayed
The joyous tidings?—Why so long concealed
The maid, nor earlier taught our hearts to glow
With brother's love?

ISABELLA. The cause—your frenzied hate,
That raging unconfined, e'en on the tomb
Of your scarce buried father, lit the flames
Of mortal strife. What! could I throw my daughter
Betwixt your gleaming blades? Or 'mid the storm
Of passion would ye list a woman's counsels?
Could she, sweet pledge of peace, of all our hopes
The last and holy anchor, 'mid the rage
Of discord find a home? Ye stand as brothers,
So will I give a sister to your arms!
The reconciling angel comes—each hour
I wait my messenger's return; he leads her
From her sequestered cell, to glad once more
A mother's eyes.

DON MANUEL. Nor her alone this day
Thy arms shall fold:—joy pours thro' all our gates;
Soon shall the desolate halls be full, the seat

Of every blooming Grace.—Now hear my secret:
A sister thou hast given; to thee I bring
A daughter—bless thy son! My heart has found
Its lasting shrine: ere this day's sun has set,
Don Manuel to thy feet shall lead his bride,
The partner of his days.

ISABELLA. And to my breast
With transport will I clasp the chosen maid,
That makes my first-born happy! Joy shall spring
Where'er she treads, and every flower that blooms
Around the path of life smile in her presence!
May bliss reward the son, that for my brows
Has twined the choicest wreath a mother wears.

CÆSAR. Yet give not all the fulness of thy blessing
To him, thy eldest born. If love be blest,
I, too, can give thee joy—I bring a daughter—
Another flower for thy most treasured garland!
The maid that in this ice-cold bosom first
Awoke the rapturous flame! Ere yonder sun
Declines—Don Cæsar's bride shall call thee mother!

DON M. Almighty Love!—thou godlike power—for well
We call thee sovereign of the breast! Thy sway
Controls each warring element, and tunes
To soft accord; nought lives but owns thy greatness!
Lo! the rude soul that long defied thee, melts
At thy command! [*He embraces* DON CÆSAR.
Now I can trust thy heart,
And joyful strain thee to a brother's arms!
I doubt thy faith no more, for thou canst love!

ISAB. Thrice blest the day, when every gloomy care
From my o'er-laboured breast has flown. I see
On steadfast columns reared our kingly race,
And with contented spirit track the stream
Of measureless time. In these deserted halls,
Sad in my widow's veil, but yesterday
Childless I roamed—and soon, in youthful charms
Arrayed, three blooming daughters at my side
Shall stand! O happiest mother! Chief of women,
In bliss supreme; can aught of earthly joy
O'erbalance thine?
But say, of royal stem,

What maidens grace our isle? For ne'er my sons
Would stoop to meaner brides.

DON MANUEL. Seek not to raise
The veil that hides my bliss; another day
Shall tell thee all Enough—Don Manuel's bride
Is worthy of thy son and thee.

ISABELLA. Thy sire
Speaks in thy words; thus to himself retired
For ever would he brood o'er counsels dark,
And cloak his secret purpose;—your delay
Be short, my son. [*Turning to* DON CÆSAR.
But thou—some royal maid,
Daughter of kings, has stirred thy soul to love;
So speak—her name—

DON CÆSAR. I have no art to veil
My thoughts with mystery's garb—my spirit free
And open as my brows; what thou wouldst know
Concerned me never. Say—what lights above
Heaven's flaming orb? Himself!—On all the world
He shines, and with his beaming glory tells
From light he sprung:—in her pure eyes I gazed,
I looked into her heart of hearts:—the brightness
Revealed the pearl. Her race—her name—my mother,
Ask not of me!

ISABELLA. My son, explain thy words,
For, like some voice divine, the sudden charm
Has thralled thy soul: to deeds of rash emprize
Thy nature prompted, not to fantasies
Of boyish love:—tell me, what swayed thy choice?

DON C. My choice? my mother! Is it choice when man
Obeys the might of Destiny, that brings
The awful hour? I sought no beauteous bride,
No fond delusion stirred my tranquil breast,
Still as the house of death; for there, unsought,
I found the treasure of my soul. Thou know'st
That, heedless ever of the giddy race,
I looked on beauty's charms with cold disdain,
Nor deemed of womankind there lived another
Like thee—whom my idolatrous fancy decked
With heavenly graces:—

'Twas the solemn rite
Of my dead father's obsequies; we stood
Amid the countless throng, with strange attire
Hid from each other's glance; for thus ordained
Thy thoughtful care, lest with outbursting rage,
E'en by the holy place unawed, our strife
Should mar the funeral pomp.
With sable gauze
The nave was all o'erhung; the altar round
Stood twenty giant Saints, uplifting each
A torch; and in the midst reposed on high
The coffin, with o'erspreading pall, that showed,
In white, Redemption's sign;—thereon were laid
The staff of sovereignty, the princely crown,
The golden spurs of knighthood, and the sword,
With diamond-studded belt:—
And all was hushed
In silent prayer, when from the lofty choir,
Unseen, the pealing organ spoke, and loud
From hundred voices burst the choral strain!
Then, 'mid the tide of song, the coffin sank
With the descending floor beneath, for ever
Down to the world below:—but, wide outspread
Above the yawning grave, the pall upheld
The gauds of earthly state, nor with the corse
To darkness fell; yet on the seraph wings
Of Harmony, the enfranchised spirit soared
To Heaven and mercy's throne:
Thus to thy thought,
My mother, I have waked the scene anew,
And say, if aught of passion in my breast
Profaned the solemn hour; yet then the beams
Of mighty Love—so willed my guiding star—
First lit my soul; but how it chanced, myself
I ask in vain.

ISABELLA. I would hear all; so end
Thy tale.

DON CÆSAR. What brought her to my side, or whence
She came, I know not:—from her presence quick
Some secret all-pervading inward charm
Awoke; 'twas not the magic of a smile,

Nor playful Cupid in her cheeks, nor more,
The form of peerless grace;—'twas Beauty's soul,
The speaking virtue, modesty inborn,
That as with magic spells, impalpable
To sense, my being thralled. We breathed together
The air of Heaven:—enough!—no utterance asked
Of words, our spiritual converse;—in my heart,
Tho' strange, yet with familiar ties inwrought
She seemed, and instant spake the thought—'tis she!
Or none that lives!

DON MANUEL (*interposing with eagerness*).
That is the sacred fire
From Heaven! The spark of love—that on the soul
Bursts like the lightning's flash, and mounts in flame,
When kindred bosoms meet! No choice remains—
Who shall resist? What mortal break the band
That Heaven has knit?—Brother, my blissful fortune
Was echoed in thy tale—well thou hast raised
The veil that shadows yet my secret love.

ISAB. Thus Destiny has marked the wayward course
Of my two sons: the mighty torrent sweeps
Down from the precipice; with rage he wears
His proper bed, nor heeds the channel traced
By art and prudent care. So to the powers,
That darkly sway the fortunes of our house,
Trembling I yield. One pledge of hope remains;
Great as their birth—their noble souls.

ISABELLA, DON MANUEL, DON CÆSAR.

DIEGO *is seen at the door.*

ISABELLA. But see,
My faithful messenger returns. Come near me,
Honest Diego. Quick! Where is she? Tell me,
Where is my child? There is no secret here.
Oh, speak! No longer from my eyes conceal her;
Come! we are ready for the height of joy.
[*She is about to lead him towards the door.*
What means this pause? Thou lingerest—thou art dumb—
Thy looks are terror-fraught—a shudder creeps

Through all my frame—declare thy tidings!—speak!
Where is she? Where is Beatrice?
[*She is about to rush from the chamber.*
DON MANUEL (*to himself abstractedly*). Beatrice!
DIEGO (*holding back the* PRINCESS). Be still!
ISAB. . Where is she? Anguish tears my breast!
DIEGO. She comes not;
I bring no daughter to thy arms.
ISABELLA. Declare
Thy message! Speak! by all the Saints!
What has befallen?
DON MANUEL. Where is my sister? Tell us,
Thou harbinger of ill!
DIEGO. The maid is stolen
By corsairs! lost! Oh! that I ne'er had seen
This day of wo!
DON MANUEL. Compose thyself, my mother!
DON C. Be calm; list all his tale.
DIEGO. At thy command
I sought in haste the well-known path that leads
To the old Sanctuary:—Joy winged my footsteps;
The journey was my last!
DON CÆSAR. Be brief!
DON MANUEL. Proceed!
DIEGO. Soon as I trode the convent's court—impatient—
I ask—"Where is thy daughter?" Terror sate
In every eye; and straight, with horror mute,
I hear the worst.
[ISABELLA *sinks, pale and trembling, upon a chair;* DON MANUEL *is busied about her.*
DON CÆSAR. Say'st thou by pirates stolen?
Who saw the band?—what tongue relates the spoil?
DIEGO. Not far a Moorish galley was descried,
At anchor in the bay—
DON CÆSAR. The refuge oft
From tempests' rage; where is the bark?
DIEGO. At dawn,
With favouring breeze she stood to sea.
DON CÆSAR. But never
One prey contents the Moor; say, have they told
Of other spoil?

DIEGO. A herd that pastured near
Was dragged away.
DON CÆSAR. Yet from the convent's bound
How tear the maid unseen?
DIEGO. 'Tis thought, with ladders,
They scaled the wall.
DON CÆSAR. Thou know'st what jealous care
Enshrines the bride of Heaven; scarce could their steps
Invade the secret cells.
DIEGO Bound by no vows,
The maiden roved at will; oft would she seek,
Alone, the garden's shade. Alas! this day,
Ne'er to return!
DON CÆSAR. Said'st thou—the prize of corsairs?—
Perchance, at other bidding, she forsook
The sheltering dome—
ISABELLA (*rising suddenly*). 'Twas force! 'twas savage spoil!
Ne'er has my child, reckless of honour's ties,
With vile seducer fled! My sons! Awake!
I thought to give a sister to your arms;
I ask a daughter from your swords! Arise!
Avenge this wrong! To arms! Launch every ship!
Scour all our coasts! From sea to sea pursue them!
O bring my daughter—haste!
DON CÆSAR. Farewell—I fly
To vengeance! [*He goes away.*
[DON MANUEL *arouses himself from a state of abstraction, and turns, with an air of agitation, to* DIEGO.
DON MANUEL. Speak! within the convent's walls
When first unseen—
DIEGO. This day at dawn.
DON MANUEL (*to* ISABELLA). Her name,
Thou say'st, is Beatrice?
ISABELLA. No questions! Fly!
DON M. Yet tell me—
ISABELLA. Haste! Begone! Why this delay?—
Follow thy brother.
DON MANUEL I conjure thee—speak—

ISABELLA (*dragging him away*).
Behold my tears!
DON MANUEL. Where was she hid? What region
Concealed my sister?
ISABELLA. Scarce from curious eyes,
In the deep bosom of the earth more safe
My child had been!
DIEGO. Oh! now a sudden horror
Starts in my breast.
DON MANUEL. What gives thee fear?
DIEGO. 'Twas I
That guiltless caused this woe!
ISABELLA. Unhappy man!
What hast thou done?
DIEGO. To spare thy mother's heart
One anxious pang, my mistress, I concealed
What now my lips shall tell:—'Twas on the day
When thy dead husband in the silent tomb
Was laid; from every side the unnumbered throng
Pressed eager to the solemn rites; thy daughter—
For e'en amid the cloistered shade was noised
The funeral pomp—urged me, with ceaseless prayers,
To lead her to the festival of Death.
In evil hour I gave consent; and, shrouded
In sable weeds of mourning, she surveyed
Her father's obsequies. With keen reproach
My bosom tells—(for through the veil her charms
Resistless shone)—'twas there, perchance, the spoiler
Lurked to betray.
DON MANUEL (*to himself*). Thrice happy words! I live!
It was another!
ISABELLA (*to* DIEGO). Faithless! Ill betide
Thy treacherous age!
DIEGO. Oh, never have I strayed
From duty's path! My mistress, in her prayers,
I heard the voice of Nature;—thus from Heaven
Ordained, methought, the secret impulse moves
Of kindred blood, to hallow with her tears
A father's grave: the tender office owned
Thy servant's care, and thus with good intent
I wrought but ill.

DON MANUEL (*to himself*). Why stand I thus, a prey
To torturing fears! No longer will I bear
The dread suspense—I will know all!
DON CÆSAR (*who returns*). Forgive me,
I follow thee.
DON MANUEL. Away! Let no man follow! [*Exit.*
DON CÆSAR (*looking after him in surprise*).
What means my brother? Speak—
ISABELLA. In wonder lost
I gaze; some mystery lurks—
DON CÆSAR. Thou mark'st, my mother,
My quick return; with eager zeal I flew
At thy command, nor asked one trace to guide
My footsteps to thy daughter. Whence was torn
Thy treasure? Say, what cloistered solitude
Enshrined the beauteous maid?
ISABELLA. 'Tis consecrate
To St. Cecilia; deep in forest shades,
Beyond the woody ridge that slowly climbs
Towards Etna's towering throne, it seems a refuge
Of parted souls!
DON CÆSAR. Have courage, trust thy sons;
She shall be thine, tho' with unwearied quest
O'er every land and sea I track her presence
To earth's extremest bounds: one thought alone
Disturbs,—in stranger hands my timorous bride
Waits my return; to thy protecting arms
I give the pledge of all my joy! She comes;
Soon on her faithful bosom thou shalt rest,
In sweet oblivion of thy cares. [*Exit.*
ISAB. When will the ancient curse be stilled, that weighs
Upon our house? Some mocking demon sports
With every new-formed hope, nor envious leaves
One hour of joy. So near the haven smiled—
So smooth the treacherous main—secure I deemed
My happiness: the storm was lulled; and bright
In evening's lustre gleamed the sunny shore:
Then thro' the placid air the tempest sweeps,
And bears me to the roaring surge again!
[*She goes into the interior of the palace, followed by* DIEGO.

The Scene changes to the Garden.

Both Choruses, afterwards BEATRICE.

The Chorus of DON MANUEL *enters in solemn procession, adorned with garlands, and bearing the bridal ornaments above mentioned. The Chorus of* DON CÆSAR *opposes their entrance.*

First Chorus (CAJETAN).
Begone!
Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).
Not at thy bidding!
CAJETAN. See'st thou not
Thy presence irks?
BOHEMUND. Thou hast it, then, the longer!
CAJET. My place is here! What arm repels me?
BOHEMUND. Mine?
CAJET. Don Manuel sent me hither.
BOHEMUND. I obey
My Lord, Don Cæsar.
CAJETAN. To the eldest born
Thy master reverence owes.
BOHEMUND. The world belongs
To him that wins!
CAJETAN. Unmannered knave, give place!
BOHEM. Our swords be measured first!
CAJETAN. I find thee ever
A serpent in my path.
BOHEMUND. Where'er I list,
Thus will I meet thee!
CAJETAN. Say, why cam'st thou hither
To spy——?
BOHEMUND. And thou to question and command?
CAJET. To parley I disdain!
BOHEMUND. Too much I grace thee
By words!
CAJETAN. Thy hot impetuous youth should bow
To reverend age.
BOHEMUND. Elder thou art—not braver.
BEATRICE (*rushing from her place of concealment*).
Alas! What mean these warlike men?

CAJETAN (*to* BOHEMUND). I heed not
Thy threats and lofty mien.
BOHEMUND. I serve a master
Better than thine.
BEATRICE. Alas! Should he appear!
CAJET. Thou liest! Don Manuel thousandfold excels.
BOHEM. In every strife the wreath of victory decks
Don Cæsar's brows!
BEATRICE. Now he will come! Already
The hour is past!
CAJETAN. 'Tis peace, or thou shouldst know
My vengeance!
BOHEMUND. Fear, not peace, thy arm refrains.
BEAT. Oh! Were he thousand miles remote!
CAJETAN. Thy looks
But move my scorn; the compact I obey.
BOHEM. The coward's ready shield!
CAJETAN. Come on! I follow.
BOHEM. To arms!
BEATRICE (*in the greatest agitation*).
Their falchions gleam—the strife begins!
Ye heavenly powers, his steps refrain! Some snare
Throw round his feet, that in this hour of dread
He come not: all ye angels, late implored
To give him to my arms, reverse my prayers;
Far, far from hence convey the loved one!
[*She runs into the alcove. At the moment when the two Choruses are about to engage,* DON MANUEL *appears.*

DON MANUEL, *the Chorus.*

DON MANUEL. Hold!
What do I see!
First Chorus to the Second (CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED).
Come on! Come on!
Second Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE).
Down with them!
DON MANUEL (*stepping between them with drawn sword*).
Hold!
CAJETAN. 'Tis the Prince!

BOHEMUND. Be still!
DON MANUEL I stretch him dead
Upon this verdant turf, that with one glance
Of scorn prolongs the strife, or threats his foe!
Why rage ye thus? What maddening fiend impels
To blow the flames of ancient hate anew,
For ever reconciled? Say, who began
The conflict?—Speak—
First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR).
My Prince, we stood—
Second Chorus (ROGER, BOHEMUND) *interrupting them.*
They came—
DON MANUEL (*to the First Chorus*).
Speak thou!
First Chorus (CAJETAN).
With wreaths adorned, in festal train,
We bore the bridal gifts; no thought of ill
Disturbed our peaceful way; composed for ever
With holy pledge of love we deemed your strife,
And trusting came; when here in rude array
Of arms encamped they stood, and loud defied us!
DON M. Slave! Is no refuge safe? Shall discord thus
Profane the bower of virgin innocence,
The home of sanctity and peace?
[*To the Second Chorus.*
Retire—
Your warlike presence ill beseems; away!
I would be private. [*They hesitate*
In your master's name
I give command; our souls are one, our lips
Declare each other's thoughts; begone!
[*To the First Chorus.*
Remain—
And guard the entrance.
BOHEMUND. So! What next? Our masters
Are reconciled; that's plain; and less he wins
Of thanks than peril, that with busy zeal
In princely quarrel stirs; for when of strife
His Mightiness aweary feels, of guilt
He throws the red-dyed mantle unconcerned
On his poor follower's luckless head, and stands

Arrayed in virtue's robes! So let them end
E'en as they will their brawls, I hold it best
That we obey.

[*Exit Second Chorus. The First withdraws to the back of the Stage; at the same moment* BEATRICE *rushes forward, and throws herself into* DON MANUEL'S *arms.*

BEATRICE. 'Tis thou! 'Ah! cruel one,
Again I see thee—clasp thee—long appalled,
To thousand ills a prey, trembling I languish
For thy return: no more—in thy loved arms
I am at peace, nor think of dangers past,
Thy breast my shield from every threatening harm
Quick! Let us fly! They see us not—away!
Nor lose the moment.
Ha! Thy looks affright me!
Thy sullen cold reserve! Thou tear'st thyself
Impatient from my circling arms, I know thee
No more! Is this Don Manuel? My beloved?
My husband?

DON MANUEL. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. No words! The moment
Is precious! Haste.

DON MANUEL. Yet tell me—

BEATRICE. Quick! Away
Ere those fierce men return.

DON MANUEL. Be calm, for nought
Shall trouble thee of ill.

BEATRICE. Oh fly!—alas,
Thou know'st them not!

DON MANUEL. Protected by this arm,
Canst thou fear aught?

BEATRICE. Oh! trust me; mighty men
Are here.

DON MANUEL. Beloved! mightier none than me!

BEAT. . And wouldst thou brave this warlike host alone?

DON M. Alone! the men thou fear'st—

BEATRICE. Thou know'st them not,
Nor whom they serve.

DON MANUEL. Myself! I am their Lord!

BEAT. . Thou art—a shudder creeps thro' all my frame!

DON M. Far other than I seemed; so learn at last
To know me, Beatrice. Not the poor knight
Am I, the stranger and unknown, that loving
Taught thee to love; but what I am—my race—
My power—
BEATRICE. And art thou not Don Manuel? Speak—
Who art thou?
DON MANUEL. Chief of all that bear the name,
I am Don Manuel, Prince of Messina!
BEAT. Art thou Don Manuel, Don Cæsar's brother?
DON M. Don Cæsar is my brother.
BEATRICE. Is thy brother!
DON M. What means this terror? Know'st thou, then, Don Cæsar?
None other of my race?
BEATRICE. Art thou Don Manuel,
That with thy brother liv'st in bitter strife
Of long inveterate hate?
DON MANUEL. This very sun
Smiled on our glad accord! Yes, we are brothers!
Brothers in heart!
BEATRICE. And reconciled? This day?
DON M. What stirs this wild disorder? Hast thou known
Aught but our name? Say, hast thou told me all?
Is there no secret? Hast thou nought concealed?
Nothing disguised?
BEATRICE. Thy words are dark; explain,
What shall I tell thee?
DON MANUEL. Of thy mother nought
Hast thou e'er told; who is she? If in words
I paint her, bring her to thy sight—
BEATRICE Thou know'st her!
And thou wert silent!
DON MANUEL If I know thy mother,
Horrors betide us both!
BEATRICE. Oh! she is gracious
As the sun's orient beam! Yes! I behold her;
Fond memory wakes;—and from my bosom's depths
Her godlike presence rises to my view!
I see around her snowy neck descend
The tresses of her raven hair, that shade

The form of sculptured loveliness; I see
The pale, high-thoughted brow; the darkening glance
Of her large lustrous orbs; I hear the tones
Of soul-fraught sweetness!

DON MANUEL. 'Tis herself!

BEATRICE. This day,
Perchance had given me to her arms, and knit
Our souls in everlasting love;—such bliss
I have renounced, yes! I have lost a mother
For thee!

DON MANUEL. Console thyself, Messina's Princess
Henceforth shall call thee daughter; to her feet
I lead thee; come—she waits.

BEATRICE. What hast thou said?
Thy mother and Don Cæsar's? Never! never!

DON M. Thou shudderest! Whence this horror? Hast thou known
My mother? Speak—

BEATRICE. O grief! O dire misfortune!
Alas! that e'er I live to see this day!

DON M. What troubles thee? Thou know'st me, thou hast found,
In the poor stranger knight, Messina's Prince.

BEAT. Give me the dear unknown again! With him,
On Earth's remotest wilds I could be blest!

DON CÆSAR (*behind the scene*).
Away! What rabble throng is here?

BEATRICE. That voice!
Oh heavens! Where shall I fly!

DON MANUEL. Know'st thou that voice?
No! thou hast never heard it; to thine ear
'Tis strange—

BEATRICE. Oh, come—delay not—

DON MANUEL. Wherefore fly?
It is my brother's voice! He seeks me—how
He tracked my steps—

BEATRICE. By all the holy Saints!
Brave not his wrath! oh quit this place—avoid him—
Meet not thy brother here!

DON MANUEL. My soul! thy fears

Confound; thou hear'st me not; our strife is o'er;
Yes! we are reconciled.

BEATRICE. Protect me, Heaven,
In this dread hour!

DON MANUEL. A sudden dire presage
Starts in my breast—I shudder at the thought!
If it be true! Oh horror! Could she know
That voice! Wert thou—my tongue denies to utter
The words of fearful import—Beatrice!
Say, wert thou present at the funeral rites
Of my dead sire?

BEATRICE. Alas!

DON MANUEL. Thou wert!

BEATRICE. Forgive me!

DON M. Unhappy woman!—

BEATRICE. I was present!

DON MANUEL. Horror!

BEAT. Some mighty impulse urged me to the scene—
Oh be not angry—to thyself I owned
The ardent fond desire; with darkening brow
Thou listenedst to my prayer, and I was silent
But what misguiding inauspicious star
Allured, I know not; from my inmost soul
The wish, the dear emotion spoke; and vain
Aught else:—Diego gave consent—oh, pardon me!
I disobeyed thee.

[*She advances towards him imploringly; at the same moment* DON CÆSAR *enters, accompanied by the whole Chorus.*

BOTH BROTHERS, BOTH CHORUSES, BEATRICE.

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND) *to* DON CÆSAR.
Thou believ'st us not—
Believe thine eyes!

DON CÆSAR (*rushes forward furiously, and at the sight of his brother starts back with horror.*
Some hell-born magic cheats
My senses; in her arms! Envenomed snake!
Is this thy love? For this thy treacherous heart
Could lure with guise of friendship! O from Heaven

Breathed my immortal hate! Down, down to Hell,
Thou soul of falsehood!

[*He stabs him,* DON MANUEL *falls.*

DON MANUEL. Beatrice!—my brother!—
I die!

[*Dies.* BEATRICE *sinks lifeless at his side.*

First Chorus (CAJETAN).
Help! Help! To arms! Avenge with blood
The bloody deed!

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND). The fortune of the day
Is ours! The strife for ever stilled:—Messina
Obeys one Lord.

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED).
Revenge! The murderer
Shall die! Quick offer to your master's shade
Appeasing sacrifice!

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE).
My Prince! fear nothing,
Thy friends are true.

DON CÆSAR (*steps between them, looking around*).
Be still! The foe is slain
That practised on my trusting honest heart
With snares of brother's love! O direful shows
The deed of death! But righteous Heaven hath judged.

First Chorus (CAJETAN).
Alas to thee, Messina! Wo for ever!
Sad city! From thy blood-stained walls this deed
Of nameless horror taints the skies: ill fare
Thy mothers and thy children, youth and age,
And offspring yet unborn!

DON CÆSAR. Too late your grief—
Here give your help. [*Pointing to* BEATRICE.
Call her to life, and quick
Depart this scene of terror and of death.
I must away and seek my sister:—Hence!
Conduct her to my mother—
And tell her that her son, Don Cæsar, sends her!

[*Exit.*

[*The senseless* BEATRICE *is placed on a litter and carried away by the Second Chorus. The*

First Chorus remains with the body, round which the boys who bear the bridal presents range themselves in a semicircle.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

List, how with dreaded mystery
Was signed to my prophetic soul,
Of kindred blood the dire decree:—
Hither with noiseless giant stride
I saw the hideous Fiend of terror glide!
'Tis past!—I strive not to control
My shuddering awe—so swift of ill
The Fates the warning sign fulfil.
Lo! to my sense dismayed,
Sudden the deed of death has shown
Whate'er my boding fears portrayed:
The visioned thought was pain;
The present horror curdles every vein!

One of the Chorus (MANFRED).

Sound, sound the plaint of wo!
Beautiful Youth!
Outstretched and pale he lies,
Untimely cropped in early bloom;
The heavy night of death has sealed his eyes;—
In this glad hour of nuptial joy,
Snatched by relentless doom,
He sleeps—while, echoing to the sky,
Of sorrow bursts the loud despairing cry!

A second (CAJETAN).

We come, we come, in festal pride,
To greet the beauteous Bride;
Behold! the nuptial gifts, the rich attire:
The banquet waits, the guests are there;
They bid thee to the solemn rite
Of Hymen quick repair.
Thou hear'st them not—the sportive lyre,
The frolic dance, shall ne'er invite;
Nor wake thee from thy lowly bed,
For deep the slumber of the dead!

The whole Chorus.

No more the echoing horn shall cheer,
Nor bride with tones of sweetness charm his ear;
On the cold earth he lies,
In death's eternal slumber closed his eyes.

A third (CAJETAN).

What are the hopes, and fond desires
Of mortals' transitory race?
This day, with harmony of voice and soul,
Ye woke the long-extinguished fires
Of brothers' love—yon flaming orb
Lit with his earliest beams your dear embrace:
At eve, upon the gory sand
Thou liest—a reeking corse!
Stretched by a brother's murderous hand.
Vain projects, treacherous hopes,
Child of the fleeting hour, are thine;
Fond man! thou rear'st on dust each bold design.

Chorus (BERENGAR).

To thy mother I will bear
The burden of unutterable wo!
Quick shall yon cypress, blooming fair,
Bend to the axe's murderous blow.
Then twine the mournful bier!
For ne'er with verdant life the tree shall smile
That grew on death's devoted soil;
Ne'er in the breeze the branches play,
Nor shade the wanderer in the noontide ray;
'Twas marked to bear the fruits of doom,
Cursed to the service of the tomb.

First (CAJETAN).

Wo to the murderer! Wo!
That sped exulting in his pride,
Behold! the parched earth drinks the crimson tide;
Down, down it flows, unceasingly,
To the dim caverned halls below,
Where throned in kindred gloom the sister train,
Of Themis progeny severe,
Brood in their songless silent reign!

Stern ministers of wrath's decree,
They catch in swarthy cups thy streaming gore,
And pledge with horrid rites for vengeance evermore!

Second (BERENGAR).

Tho' swift of deeds the traces fade
From earth, before the enlivening ray;
As o'er the brow the transient shade
Of thought, the hues of fancy flit away:—
Yet in the mystic womb unseen,
Of the dark ruling Hours that sway
Our mortal lot, whate'er *has been*,
With new creative germ defies decay.
The blooming field is time,
For Nature's ever-teeming shoot,
And all is seed, and all is fruit.

[*The Chorus goes away, bearing the corpse of* DON MANUEL *on a bier.*

SCENE.—*The Hall of Pillars. It is night.*

The stage is lighted from above by a single large lamp.

DONNA ISABELLA *and* DIEGO *advance to the front.*

ISAB. As yet no joyful tidings, not a trace
Found of the lost one!

DIEGO. Nothing have we heard,
My mistress; yet o'er every track, unwearied,
Thy sons pursue. Ere long the rescued maid
Shall smile at dangers past.

ISABELLA. Alas! Diego,
My heart is sad; 'twas I that caused this wo!

DIEGO. Vex not thy anxious bosom; nought escaped
Thy thoughtful care.

ISABELLA. Oh! had I earlier shown
The hidden treasure!

DIEGO. Prudent were thy counsels,
Wisely thou left'st her in retirement's shade;
So, trust in Heaven.

ISABELLA. Alas! no joy is perfect—
Without this chance of ill my bliss were pure

DIEGO. Thy happiness is but delayed; enjoy
The concord of thy sons.
ISABELLA. The sight was rapture
Supreme—when, locked in one another's arms,
They glowed with brothers' love.
DIEGO. And in the heart
It burns; for ne'er their princely souls have stooped
To mean disguise.
ISABELLA. Now, too, their bosoms wake
To gentler thoughts, and own the softening sway
Of love. No more their hot impetuous youth
Revels in liberty untamed, and spurns
Restraint of Law—attempered passion's self,
With modest chaste reserve.
To thee, Diego,
I will unfold my secret heart; this hour
Of feeling's opening bloom, expected long,
Wakes boding fears: thou know'st to sudden rage
Love stirs tumultuous breasts;—and if this flame
With jealousy should rouse the slumbering fires
Of ancient hate—I shudder at the thought!
If these discordant souls perchance have thrilled
In fatal unison!—Enough—the clouds,
That black with thundering menace o'er me hung,
Are past; some angel sped them tranquil by,
And my enfranchised spirit breathes again!
DIEGO. Rejoice, my mistress; for thy gentle sense,
And soft prevailing art, more weal have wrought
Than all thy husband's power. Be praise to thee
And thy auspicious star!
ISABELLA. Yes! fortune smiled;
Nor light the task, so long with apt disguise
To veil the cherished secret of my heart,
And cheat my ever-jealous lord: more hard
To stifle mighty nature's pleading voice,
That, like a prisoned fire, for ever strove
To rend its confines.
DIEGO. All shall yet be well;
Fortune, propitious to our hopes, gave pledge
Of bliss that time will show.

ISABELLA. I praise not yet
My natal star, while darkening o'er my fate
This mystery hangs: too well the dire mischance
Tells of the Fiend whose never slumbering rage
Pursues our house. Now list what I have done,
And praise or blame me as thou wilt; from thee
My bosom guards no secret:—ill I brook
This dull repose, while swift o'er land and sea
My sons unwearied track their sister's flight,
Yes! I have sought—Heaven counsels oft, when vain
All mortal aid.

DIEGO. What I may know, my Mistress,
Declare.

ISABELLA. On Etna's solitary height
A reverend Hermit dwells;—benamed of old,
The Mountain Seer;—who to the realms of light
More near abiding than the toilsome race
Of mortals here below, with purer air
Has cleansed each earthly grosser sense away;
And from the lofty peak of gathered years,
As from his mountain home, with downward glance
Surveys the crooked paths of worldly strife.
To him are known the fortunes of our house;
Oft has the holy Sage besought response
From Heaven, and many a curse with earnest prayer
Averted: thither at my bidding flew,
On wings of youthful haste, a messenger,
To ask some tidings of my child: each hour
I wait his homeward footsteps.

DIEGO. If mine eyes
Deceive me not, he comes; and well his speed
Has earned thy praise.

MESSENGER, ISABELLA, DIEGO.

ISABELLA (*to* MESSENGER).
Now speak, and nothing hide
Of weal or woe: be Truth upon thy lips!
What tidings bear'st thou from the mountain Seer?

MESS. His answer, "Quick, retrace thy steps—the lost one
Is found."

ISABELLA. Auspicious tongue! Celestial sounds
Of peace and joy! thus ever to my vows,
Thrice honoured Sage, thy kindly message spoke!
But say, which heaven-directed brother traced
My daughter?

MESSENGER. 'Twas thy eldest born that found
The deep-secluded maid.

ISABELLA. Is it Don Manuel
That gives her to my arms? Oh, he was ever
The child of blessing! Tell me, hast thou borne
My offering to the aged man?—the tapers
To burn before his Saint? for gifts, the prize
Of worldly hearts, the man of God disdains.

MESS. . He took the torches from my hands in silence,
And stepping to the altar—where the lamp
Burned to his Saint—illumed them at its fire,
And instant set in flames the hermit cell,
Where he has honoured God these ninety years!

ISAB. . What hast thou said? What horrors fright my soul?

MESS. . And three times shrieking "Wo!" with downward course,
He fled; but silent with uplifted arm
Beckoned me not to follow, nor regard him!
So hither I have hastened, terror sped.

ISAB. . O, I am tossed amid the surge again
Of doubt and anxious fears; thy tale appals
With ominous sounds of ill. My daughter found—
Thou say'st; and by my eldest born, Don Manuel?
The tidings ne'er shall bless, that heralded
This deed of woe!

MESSENGER. My Mistress! look around,
Behold the hermit's message to thine eyes
Fulfilled. Some charm deludes my sense, or hither
Thy daughter comes, girt by the warlike train
Of thy two sons!

[BEATRICE *is carried in by the Second Chorus on a litter, and placed in the front of the stage. She is still without perception, and motionless.*

ISABELLA, DIEGO, MESSENGER, BEATRICE.

Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE, *and the other nine followers of* DON CÆSAR).

Chorus (BOHEMUND). Here at thy feet we lay
The maid, obedient to our Lord's command:
'Twas thus he spoke—"Conduct her to my mother;
And tell her that her son, Don Cæsar, sends her!"

ISABELLA (*is advancing towards her with outstretched arms, and starts back in horror*).
Heavens! she is motionless and pale!

Chorus (BOHEMUND). She lives,
She will awake, but give her time to rouse
From the dread shock that holds each sense enthralled

ISAB. My daughter! Child of all my cares and pains!
And is it thus I see thee once again?
Thus thou returnest to thy father's halls!
O let my breath relume thy vital spark;
Yes! I will strain thee to a mother's arms,
And hold thee fast—till, from the frost of death
Released, thy life-warm current throbs again
[*To the Chorus.*
Where hast thou found her? Speak! What dire mischance
Has caused this sight of woe?

Chorus (BOHEMUND). My lips are dumb!
Ask not of me: thy son will tell thee all—
Don Cæsar—for 'tis he that sends her.

ISABELLA. Tell me,
Would'st thou not say Don Manuel?

Chorus (BOHEMUND). 'Tis Don Cæsar
That sends her to thee.

ISABELLA (*to the* MESSENGER). How declared the Seer?
Speak! Was it not Don Manuel?

MESSENGER. 'Twas he!
Thy elder born.

ISABELLA. Be blessings on his head
Whiche'er it be; to him I owe a daughter.
Alas! that in this blissful hour, so long
Expected, long implored, some envious Fiend
Should mar my joy! Oh, I must stem the tide

Of nature's transport! In her childhood's home
I see my daughter; me she knows not—heeds not—
Nor answers to a mother's voice of love!
Ope, ye dear eyelids—hands be warm—and heave
Thou lifeless bosom with responsive throbs
To mine! 'Tis she!—Diego, look! 'tis Beatrice!
The long-concealed—the lost—the rescued one!
Before the world I claim her for my own!

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

New signs of terror to my boding soul
Are pictured;—in amazement lost I stand!
What light shall pierce this gloom of mystery?

ISABELLA (*to the Chorus, who exhibit marks of confusion and embarrassment*).

O ye hard hearts! Ye rude unpitying men!
A mother's transport from your breasts of steel
Rebounds, as from the rocks the heaving surge!
I look around your train, nor mark one glance
Of soft regard. Where are my sons? Oh tell me
Why come they not, and from their beaming eyes
Speak comfort to my soul? For here environed,
I stand amid the desert's raging brood,
Or monsters of the deep!

DIEGO. She opes her eyes!
She moves! She lives!

ISABELLA. She lives! On me be thrown
Her earliest glance!

DIEGO. See! They are closed again—
She shudders!

ISABELLA (*to the Chorus*).

Quick! Retire—your aspect frights her.
[*Chorus steps back.*

BOHEM. Well pleased I shun her sight.

DIEGO. With outstretched eyes,
And wonderstruck, she seems to measure thee.

BEAT. Not strange those lineaments—where am I?

ISABELLA. Slowly
Her sense returns.

DIEGO. Behold! upon her knees
She sinks.

BEATRICE. O angel visage of my mother!

ISAB. . Child of my heart!
BEATRICE. See! kneeling at thy feet
The guilty one!
ISABELLA. I hold thee in my arms!
Enough—forgotten all!
DIEGO. Look in my face,
Canst thou remember me?
BEATRICE. The reverend brows
Of honest old Diego!
ISABELLA. Faithful guardian
Of thy young years.
BEATRICE. And am I once again
With kindred?
ISABELLA. Nought but death shall part us more!
BEAT. . Will thou ne'er send me to the stranger?
ISABELLA. Never!
Fate is appeased.
BEATRICE. And am I next thy heart?
And was it all a dream—a hideous dream?
My mother! at my feet he fell!—I know not
What brought me hither—yet 'tis well.—O bliss!
That I am safe in thy protecting arms;
They would have ta'en me to the Princess Mother—
Sooner to death!
ISABELLA. My daughter, calm thy fears;
Messina's Princess—
BEATRICE. Name her not again!
At that ill-omened sound the chill of death
Creeps through my trembling frame.
ISABELLA. My child! but hear me—
BEAT. . She has two sons by mortal hate dissevered,
Don Manuel and Don Cæsar—
ISABELLA. 'Tis myself!
Behold thy mother!
BEATRICE. Have I heard thee? Speak!
ISAB. . I am thy mother, and Messina's Princess!
BEAT. . Art thou Don Manuel's and Don Cæsar's mother?
ISAB. . And thine! They are thy brethren whom thou nam'st.
BEAT. . O gleam of horrid light!
ISABELLA. What troubles thee?
Say, whence this strange emotion?

BEATRICE. Yes! 'twas they!
Now I remember all; no dream deceived me,
They met—'tis fearful truth! Unhappy men!—
Where have ye hid him?

She rushes towards the Chorus: they turn away from her. A funeral march is heard in the distance.

Chorus. Horror! Horror!

ISABELLA. Hid!
Speak—who is hid? and what is true? Ye stand
In silent dull amaze—as tho' ye fathomed
Her words of mystery!—In your faltering tones—
Your brows—I read of horrors yet unknown,
That would refrain my tongue! What is it? Tell me!
I will know all! Why fix ye on the door
That awe-struck gaze? What mournful music sounds?

[*The march is heard nearer.*

Chorus (BOHEMUND).
It comes! it comes! and all shall be declared
With terrible voice. My Mistress! steel thy heart;
Be firm, and bear with courage what awaits thee—
For more than woman's soul thy destined griefs
Demand.

ISABELLA. What comes? and what awaits me? Hark!
With fearful tones the death-wail smites mine ear—
It echoes thro' the house! Where are my sons?

[*The first Semichorus brings in the body of* DON MANUEL *on a bier, which is placed at the side of the stage. A black pall is spread over it.*

ISABELLA, BEATRICE, DIEGO.

Both Choruses.

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

With Sorrow in his train,
From street to street the King of Terror glides;
With stealthy foot, and slow,
He creeps where'er the fleeting race
Of man abides!

In turn at every gate
Is heard the dreaded knock of Fate,
The message of unutterable woe!

BERENGAR.

When, in the sere
And Autumn leaves decayed,
The mournful forest tells how quickly fade
The glories of the year!
When in the silent tomb opprest,
Frail man, with weight of days,
Sinks to his tranquil rest;
Contented Nature but obeys
Her everlasting law,—
The general doom awakes no shuddering awe!
But, mortals, oh! prepare
For mightier ills: with ruthless hand,
Fell murder cuts the holy band—
The kindred tie: insatiate Death,
With unrelenting rage,
Bears to his bark the flower of blooming age!

CAJETAN.

When clouds athwart the lowering sky
Are driven—when bursts with hollow moan
The thunder's peal—our trembling bosoms own
The might of awful Destiny!
Yet oft the lightning's glare
Darts sudden thro' the cloudless air:—
Then in thy short delusive day
Of bliss, oh! dread the treacherous snare;
Nor prize the fleeting goods and vain,
The flowers that bloom but to decay!
Nor wealth, nor joy, nor aught but pain,
Was e'er to mortal's lot secure:—
Our first best lesson—to endure!

ISAB. What shall I hear? What horrors lurk beneath
This funeral pall?

[She steps towards the bier, but suddenly pauses, and stands irresolute.

Some strange mysterious dread

Enthrals my sense. I would approach, and sudden
The icecold grasp of terror holds me back!

[*To* BEATRICE, *who has thrown herself between her and the bier.*

Whate'er it be, I will unveil—

[*On raising the pall, she discovers the body of* DON MANUEL.

Eternal Powers! It is my son!

[*She stands in mute horror.* BEATRICE *sinks to the ground with a shriek of anguish near the bier.*

Chorus. Unhappy mother! 'tis thy son. Thy lips
Have uttered what my faltering tongue denied!

ISAB. My soul! My Manuel! O eternal grief!
And is it thus I see thee? Thus thy life
Has bought thy sister from the spoiler's rage?
Where was thy brother? Could no arm be found
To shield thee?—O be curst the hand that dug
These gory wounds! A curse on her that bore
The murderer of my son! Ten thousand curses
On all their race!

Chorus. Wo! Wo!

ISABELLA. And is it thus
Ye keep your word, ye Gods? Is this your truth
Alas! for him that trusts with honest heart
Your soothing wiles. Why have I hoped and trembled?
And this the issue of my prayers! Attend,
Ye terror-stricken witnesses, that feed
Your gaze upon my anguish; learn to know
How warning visions cheat, and boding seers
But mock our credulous hopes:—let none believe
The voice of Heaven!
When in my teeming womb
This daughter lay, her father, in a dream,
Saw from his nuptial couch two laurels grow,
And in the midst a lily all in flames,
That catching swift the boughs and knotted stems,
Burst forth with crackling rage, and o'er the house
Spread in one mighty sea of fire. Perplexed
By this terrific dream, my husband sought
The counsels of the mystic art, and thus

Pronounced the Sage—" If I a daughter bore,
The murderess of his sons, the destined spring
Of ruin to our house, the baleful child
Should see the light."

Chorus (CAJETAN *and* BOHEMUND)
What hast thou said, my Mistress
Wo! Wo!

ISABELLA. For this her ruthless father spoke
The dire behest of death. I rescued her,
The innocent, the doomed one:—from my arms
The babe was torn: to stay the curse of Heaven,
And save my sons, the mother gave her child;
And now by robber hands her brother falls;—
My child is guiltless;—O, she slew him not!

Chorus Wo! Wo!

ISAB. No trust the fabling readers of the stars
Have e'er deserved! Hear how another spoke
With comfort to my soul, and him I deemed
Inspired to voice the secrets of the skies!
" My daughter should unite in love the hearts
Of my dissevered sons:"—and thus their tales
Of curse and blessing on her head, proclaim
Each other's falsehood. No! she ne'er has brought
A curse—the innocent! nor time was given
The blessed promise to fulfil! Their tongues
Were false alike—their boasted art is vain—
With trick of words they cheat our credulous ears,
Or are themselves deceived! Nought ye may know
Of dark futurity, the sable streams
Of Hell the fountain of your hidden lore,
Or yon bright spring of everlasting light!

First Chorus (CAJETAN).
Wo! Wo! thy tongue refrain!
Oh, pause, nor thus with impious rage
The might of Heaven profane;
The holy oracles are wise—
Expect with awe thy coming destinies!

ISAB. My tongue shall speak as prompts my swelling heart;
My griefs shall cry to Heaven! Why do we lift
Our suppliant hands, and at the sacred shrines
Kneel to adore? Good easy dupes! What win we
From faith and pious awe?—to touch with prayers

The tenants of yon azure realms on high,
Were hard as with an arrow's point to pierce
The silvery moon. Hid is the womb of Time,
Impregnable to mortal glance, and deaf
The adamantine walls of Heaven rebound
The voice of anguish:—O 'tis one, whate'er
The flight of birds—the aspect of the stars!
The Book of Nature is a maze—a dream
The Sage's art,—and every sign a falsehood!

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Wo! Wo! Ill-fated woman, stay
Thy maddening blasphemies;
Thou but disown'st, with purblind eyes,
The flaming Orb of day!
Confess the Gods,—they dwell on high—
They circle thee with awful majesty!

All the Knights.

Confess the Gods—they dwell on high—
They circle thee with awful majesty!

BEATRICE.

Why hast thou saved thy daughter, and defied
The curse of Heaven, that marked me in thy womb
The child of woe? Short-sighted mother!—vain
Thy little arts, to cheat the doom declared
By the all-wise interpreters, that knit
The far and near; and, with prophetic ken,
See the late harvest spring in times unborn.
O thou hast brought destruction on thy race,
Withholding from the avenging Gods their prey;
Threefold, with new embittered rage, they ask
The direful penalty; no thanks thy boon
Of life deserves—the fatal gift was sorrow!

Second Chorus (BERENGAR) *looking towards the door with signs of agitation.*

Hark to the sound of dread!
The rattling brazen din I hear!
Of hell-born snakes the hissing tones are near!
Yes—'tis the Furies' tread!

CAJETAN.

In crumbling ruin wide,
Fall, fall, thou roof, and sink thou trembling floor
That bear'st the dread unearthly stride!
Ye sable damps arise!
Mount from the abyss in smoky spray,
And pall the brightness of the day!
Vanish, ye guardian Powers!
They come! The avenging Deities!

DON CÆSAR, ISABELLA, BEATRICE. *The Chorus.*

On the entrance of DON CÆSAR, *the Chorus station themselves before him imploringly. He remains standing alone in the centre of the stage.*

BEAT. . Alas! 'tis he—

ISABELLA (*stepping to meet him*).

My Cæsar! O, my son!
And is it thus I meet thee? Look! Behold!
The crime of hand accurst!—
[*She leads him to the corse.*

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR).

Break forth once more
Ye wounds! Flow, flow, in swarthy flood,
Thou streaming gore!

ISAB. . Shuddering with earnest gaze, and motionless,
Thou stand'st:—yes! there my hopes repose, and all
That earth has of thy brother; in the bud
Nipp'd is your concord's tender flower, nor ever
With beauteous fruit shall glad a mother's eyes.

DON C. Be comforted; thy sons, with honest heart,
To peace aspired, but Heaven's decree was blood!

ISAB. . I know thou lovedst him well; I saw between ye,
With joy, the bands of nature sweetly twined;
Thou wouldst have borne him in thy heart of hearts,
With rich atonement of long wasted years!
But see—fell Murder thwarts thy dear design,
And nought remains but vengeance!

DON CÆSAR. Come, my mother,

This is no place for thee. Oh, haste and leave
This sight of woe! [*He endeavours to drag her away.*

ISABELLA (*throwing herself into his arms*).
Thou liv'st! I have a son!

BEAT. Alas! my mother!

DON CÆSAR. On this faithful bosom
Weep out thy pains;—nor lost thy son,—his love
Shall dwell immortal in thy Cæsar's breast.

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED).

Break forth, ye wounds!—
Dumb witnesses!—the truth proclaim;
Flow fast, thou gory stream!

ISABELLA (*clasping the hands of* DON CÆSAR *and* BEATRICE).
My children!

DON CÆSAR. Oh, 'tis ecstasy! my mother,
To see her in thy arms!—henceforth in love
A daughter—sister—

ISABELLA (*interrupting him*).
Thou hast kept thy word,
My son;—to thee I owe the rescued one;
Yes, thou hast sent her—

DON CÆSAR (*in astonishment*).
Whom, my mother, sayst thou,
That I have sent?

ISABELLA. She stands before thine eyes—
Thy sister.

DON CÆSAR. She! My sister?

ISABELLA. Ay, what other?

DON C. My sister!

ISABELLA. Thou hast sent her to me!

DON CÆSAR. Horror!
His sister, too!

CHORUS. Woe! woe!

BEATRICE. Alas! my mother!

ISAB. Speak! I am all amaze!

DON CÆSAR. Be curst the day
When I was born!

ISABELLA. Eternal Powers!

DON CÆSAR. Accurst

The womb that bore me; curst thy secret arts,
The spring of all this woe; instant to crush thee,
Though the dread thunder swept—ne'er should this arm
Refrain the bolts of death:—I slew my brother!
Hear it and tremble! in her arms I found him—
She was my love, my chosen bride;—and he—
My brother—in her arms! Thou hast heard all!
If it be true—oh, if she be my sister—
And his!—then I have done a deed that mocks
The power of sacrifice and prayers to ope
The gates of Mercy to my soul!

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

The tidings on thy heart dismayed
Have burst, and nought remains; behold!
'Tis come, nor long delayed,
Whate'er the warning seers foretold:
They spoke the message from on high,
Their lips proclaimed resistless destiny!
The mortal shall the curse fulfil,
Who seeks to turn predestined ill

ISAB. The Gods have done their worst; if they be true
Or false, 'tis one—for nothing they can add
To this—the measure of their rage is full.
Why should I tremble that have nought to fear?
My darling son lies murdered, and the living
I call my son no more. Oh! I have borne
And nourished at my breast a basilisk
That stung my best-loved child My daughter, haste,
And leave this house of horrors—I devote it
To the avenging Fiends!—In evil hour,
'Twas crime that brought me hither, and of crime
The victim I depart. Unwillingly
I came—in sorrow I have lived—despairing
I quit these halls; on me, the innocent,
Descends this weight of woe! Enough—'tis shown
That Heaven is just, and oracles are true!

[*Exit, followed by* DIEGO.

BEATRICE, DON CÆSAR, *The Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR (*detaining* BEATRICE).

My sister, wouldst thou leave me? On this head
A mother's curse may fall—a brother's blood
Cry with accusing voice to Heaven—all Nature
Invoke eternal vengeance on my soul—
But thou—Oh! curse me not—I cannot bear it!

[BEATRICE *points with averted eyes to the body.*

I have not slain thy lover! 'twas thy brother,
And mine, that fell beneath my sword; and near
As the departed one, the living owns
The ties of blood: remember, too, 'tis I
That most a sister's pity need—for pure
His spirit winged its flight, and I am guilty!

[BEATRICE *bursts into an agony of tears.*

Weep! I will blend my tears with thine—nay, more,
I will avenge thy brother; but the lover—
Weep not for him—thy passionate yearning tears
My inmost heart. Oh! from the boundless depths
Of our affliction, let me gather this,
The last and only comfort—but to know
That we are dear alike. One lot fulfilled
Has made our rights and wretchedness the same;
Entangled in one snare we fall together,
Three hapless victims of unpitying Fate,
And share the mournful privilege of tears.
But when I think that for the lover more
Than for the brother bursts thy sorrow's tide,
Then rage and envy mingle with my pain,
And Hope's last balm forsakes my withering soul!—
Nor joyful, as beseems, can I requite
This injured Shade:—yet after him content
To Mercy's throne my contrite spirit shall fly,
Sped by this hand—if dying I may know
That in one urn our ashes shall repose,
With pious office of a sister's care.

[*He throws his arms around her with passionate tenderness.*

I loved thee, as I ne'er had loved before,
When thou wert strange; and that I bear the curse

Of brother's blood, 'tis but because I loved thee
With measureless transport: love was all my guilt.
But now thou art my sister, and I claim
Soft pity's tribute.

[*He regards her with inquiring glances, and an air of painful suspense—then turns away with vehemence.*

No! in this dread presence
I cannot bear these tears—my courage flies,
And doubt distracts my soul. Go, weep in secret—
Leave me in error's maze—but never, never,
Behold me more: I will not look again
On thee, nor on thy mother. Oh! how passion
Laid bare her secret heart! She never loved me!
She mourned her best-loved son—that was her cry
Of grief—and nought was mine but show of fondness!
And thou art false as she! make no disguise—
Recoil with horror from my sight—this form
Shall never shock thee more—begone for ever! [*Exit.*

[*She stands irresolute in a tumult of conflicting passions—then tears herself from the spot.*

Chorus (CAJETAN).

. . . . . .

Happy the man—his lot I prize—
That far from pomps and turmoil vain,
Child-like on Nature's bosom lies
Amid the stillness of the plain.
My heart is sad in the princely hall,
When from the towering pride of state,
I see with headlong ruin fall,
How swift! the good and great!

And he—from Fortune's storms at rest—
Smiles, in the quiet haven laid,
Who, timely warned, has owned how blest
The refuge of the cloistered shade;
To honour's race has bade farewell,
Its idle joys and empty shows;
Insatiate wishes learned to quell,
And lulled in Wisdom's calm repose:—

No more shall Passion's maddening brood
Impel the busy scenes to try,
Nor on his peaceful cell intrude
The form of sad Humanity!
'Mid crowds and strife each mortal ill
Abides—the grisly train of woe
Shuns like the Pest the breezy hill,
To haunt the smoky marts below.

BERENGAR, BOHEMUND, *and* MANFRED

On the mountains is freedom! the breath of delay
Never sullies the fresh flowing air;
O Nature is perfect wherever we stray;
'Tis man that deforms it with care.

The whole Chorus repeats.

On the mountains is freedom, &c., &c.

DON CÆSAR, *the Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR (*more collected*).

I use the princely rights—'tis the last time—
To give this body to the ground, and pay
Fit honours to the dead. So mark, my friends,
My bosom's firm resolve, and quick fulfil
Your lord's behest. Fresh in your memory lives
The mournful pomp, when to the tomb ye bore
So late my royal sire; scarce in these halls
Are stilled the echoes of the funeral wail;—
Another corse succeeds, and in the grave
Weighs down its fellow-dust—almost our torch,
With borrowed lustre from the last, may pierce
The monumental gloom; and on the stair,
Blend in one throng confused each mourning train.
Then in the sacred royal dome that guards
The ashes of my sire, prepare with speed
The funeral rites; unseen of mortal eye,
And noiseless be your task—let all be graced,
As then, with circumstance of kingly state.

BOHEM. My Prince, it shall be quickly done; for still

Upreared, the gorgeous Catafalque recalls
The dread solemnity: no hand disturbed
The edifice of Death.

DON CÆSAR. The yawning grave
Amid the haunts of life? No goodly sign
Was this: the rites fulfilled, why lingered yet
The trappings of the funeral show?

BOHEMUND. Your strife
With fresh embittered hate o'er all Messina
Woke Discord's maddening flames, and from the dead
Our cares withdrew—so desolate remained,
And closed the sanctuary.

DON CÆSAR. Make no delay;
This very night fulfil your task, for well
Beseems the midnight gloom! To-morrow's sun
Shall find this palace cleansed of every stain,
And light a happier race.

[*Exit the Second Chorus, with the body of* DON MANUEL.

CAJETAN. Shall I invite
The Brotherhood of monks, with rites ordained
By Holy Church of old, to celebrate
The office of departed souls, and hymn
The buried one to everlasting rest?

DON C. Their strains above my tomb shall sound for ever
Amid the torches' blaze—no solemn rites
Beseem the day when gory murder scares
Heaven's pardoning grace.

CAJETAN. O, let not wild despair
Tempt thee to impious rash resolve. My Prince,
No mortal arm shall e'er avenge this deed;
And penance calms, with soft atoning power,
The wrath on high.

DON CÆSAR. If for eternal justice
Earth has no minister, myself shall wield
The avenging sword; though Heaven, with gracious ear,
Inclines to sinners' prayers, with blood alone
Atoned is murder's guilt.

CAJETAN. To stem the tide

Of dire misfortune, that with maddening rage
Bursts o'er your house, were nobler than to pile
Accumulated woe.

DON CÆSAR. The curse of old
Shall die with me! Death self-imposed alone
Can break the chain of Fate.

CAJETAN. Thou ow'st thyself
A sovereign to this orphaned land, by thee
Robbed of its other lord!

DON CÆSAR. The avenging Gods
Demand their prey—some other Deity
May guard the living!

CAJETAN. Wide as e'er the sun
In glory beams, the realm of Hope extends;
But—Oh remember!—nothing may we gain
From Death!

DON CÆSAR. Remember thou thy vassal's duty;—
Remember, and be silent! Leave to me
To follow, as I list, the Spirit of power
That leads me to the goal. No happy one
May look into my breast:—but if thy Prince
Owns not a subject's homage, dread at least
The murderer!—the accurst!—and to the head
Of the unhappy—sacred to the Gods—
Give honours due. The pangs that rend my soul—
What I have suffered—what I feel—have left
No place for earthly thoughts!

DONNA ISABELLA, DON CÆSAR, *The Chorus.*

ISABELLA (*enters with hesitating steps, and looks irresolutely towards* DON CÆSAR; *at last she approaches, and addresses him with collected tones*).
I thought mine eyes should ne'er behold thee more;—
Thus I had vowed despairing! Oh, my son!
How quickly all a mother's stern resolves
Melt into air! 'Twas but the cry of rage
That stifled Nature's pleading voice; but now
What tidings of mysterious import call me
Forth from the desolate chambers of my sorrow?

Shall I believe it? Is it true?—one day
Robs me of both my sons?

Chorus.

Behold! with willing steps and free,
Thy son prepares to tread
The paths of dark eternity—
The silent mansions of the dead.
My prayers are vain; but thou, with power confest
Of nature's holiest passion, storm his breast!

ISAB. I call the curses back—that in the frenzy
Of blind despair on thy beloved head
I poured. A mother may not curse the child
That from her nourishing breast drew life, and gave
Sweet recompense for all her travail past:
Heaven would not hear the impious vows; they fell
With quick rebound, and heavy with my tears,
Down from the flaming vault.
Live! live! my son!
For I may rather bear to look on thee—
The murderer of one child—than weep for both!

DON C. Heedless and vain, my mother, are thy prayers
For me and for thyself;—I have no place
Among the living:—if thine eyes may brook
The murderer's sight abhorred—I could not bear
The mute reproach of thy eternal sorrow.

ISAB. Silent or loud, my son, reproach shall never
Disturb thy breast—ne'er in these halls shall sound
The voice of wailing, gently on my tears
My griefs shall flow away:—the sport alike
Of pitiless Fate, together we will mourn,
And veil the deed of blood.

DON CÆSAR (*with a faltering voice, and taking her hand*).
Thus it shall be,
My mother—thus with silent, gentle woe
Thy grief shall fade: but when one common tomb
The murderer and his victim closes round—
When o'er our dust one monumental stone
Is rolled—the curse shall cease—thy love no more
Unequal bless thy sons: the precious tears
Thine eyes of beauty weep, shall sanctify

Alike our memories. Yes! In death are quenched
The fires of rage; and Hatred owns subdued,
The mighty reconciler. Pity bends
An angel form above the funeral urn,
With weeping dear embrace. Then to the tomb
Stay not my passage:—Oh! forbid me not,
Thus with atoning sacrifice to quell
The curse of Heaven.

ISABELLA. All Christendom is rich
In shrines of mercy, where the troubled heart
May find repose. Oh! many a heavy burden
Have sinners in Loretto's mansion laid;
And Heaven's peculiar blessing breathes around
The grave that has redeemed the world!—The prayers
Of the devout are precious—fraught with store
Of grace, they win forgiveness from the skies;—
And on the soil by gory murder stained
Shall rise the purifying fane.

DON CÆSAR. We pluck
The arrow from the wound—but the torn heart
Shall ne'er be healed. Let him who can, drag on
A weary life of penance and of pain,
To cleanse the spot of everlasting guilt;—
I would not live the victim of despair;
No! I must meet with beaming eye the smile
Of happy ones, and breathe erect the air
Of liberty and joy. While yet alike
We shared thy love, then o'er my days of youth
Pale Envy cast his withering shade; and now,
Think'st thou my heart could brook the dearer ties
That bind thee in thy sorrow to the dead?
Death, in his undecaying palace throned,
To the pure diamond of perfect virtue
Sublimes the mortal, and with chastening fire
Each gathered stain of frail humanity
Purges and burns away: high as the stars
Tower o'er this earthly sphere, he soars above me;
And as by ancient hate dissevered long,
Brethren and equal denizens we lived,
So now my restless soul with envy pines,
That he has won from me the glorious prize

Of immortality, and like a God
In memory marches on to times unborn!

ISAB. My sons! Why have I called you to Messina
To find for each a grave? I brought ye hither
To calm your strife to peace. Lo! Fate has turned
My hopes to blank despair.

DON CÆSAR. Whate'er was spoke,
My mother, is fulfilled! Blame not the end
By Heaven ordained. We trode our father's halls
With hopes of peace; and reconciled for ever,
Together we shall sleep in death.

ISABELLA. My son,
Live for thy mother! In the stranger's land,
Say, wouldst thou leave me friendless and alone,
To cruel scorn a prey—no filial arm
To shield my helpless age?

DON CÆSAR. When all the world
With heartless taunts pursues thee, to our grave
For refuge fly, my mother, and invoke
Thy sons' divinity—we shall be Gods!
And we will hear thy prayers:—and as the Twins
Of Heaven, a beaming star of comfort shine
To the tost shipman—we will hover near thee
With present help, and soothe thy troubled soul!

ISAB. Live—for thy mother, live, my son—
Must I lose all?

[*She throws her arms about him with passionate emotion. He gently disengages himself, and, turning his face away, extends to her his hand.*

DON CÆSAR. Farewell!

ISABELLA. I can no more!
Too well my tortured bosom owns how weak
A mother's prayers: a mightier voice shall sound
Resistless on thy heart.

[*She goes towards the entrance of the scene.*

My daughter, come!
A brother calls him to the realms of night;
Perchance with golden hues of earthly joy
The sister, the beloved, may gently lure
The wanderer to life again.

[BEATRICE *appears at the entrance of the scene.*

DONNA ISABELLA, DON CÆSAR, *and the Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR (*on seeing her, covers his face with his hands*).
My mother!
What hast thou done?

ISABELLA (*leading* BEATRICE *forwards*).
A mother's prayers are vain!
Kneel at his feet—conjure him—melt his heart!
Oh! bid him live!

DON CÆSAR. Deceitful mother, thus
Thou triest thy son! And wouldst thou stir my soul
Again to passion's strife, and make the sun
Beloved once more, now when I tread the paths
Of everlasting night? See where he stands—
Angel of life!—and wondrous beautiful,
Shakes from his plenteous horn the fragrant store
Of golden fruits and flowers, that breathe around
Divinest airs of joy;—my heart awakes
In the warm sunbeam—hope returns, and life
Thrills in my breast anew.

ISABELLA (*to* BEATRICE). Thou wilt prevail!
Or none! Implore him that he live, nor rob
The staff and comfort of our days.

BEATRICE. The loved one
A sacrifice demands. Oh, let me die
To soothe a brother's shade! Yes, I will be
The victim! Ere I saw the light forewarned
To death, I live a wrong to Heaven! The curse
Pursues me still:—'twas I that slew thy son—
I waked the slumbering furies of their strife—
Be mine the atoning blood!

CAJETAN. Ill-fated mother!
Impatient all thy children haste to doom,
And leave thee on the desolate waste alone
Of joyless life.

BEATRICE. Oh, spare thy precious days
For Nature's band. Thy mother needs a son;
My brother, live for her! Light were the pang
To lose a daughter—but a moment shown,
Then snatched away!

DON CÆSAR (*with deep emotion*). 'Tis one to live or die,
Blest with a sister's love!

BEATRICE. Say—dost thou envy
Thy brother's ashes?
DON CÆSAR. In thy grief he lives
A hallowed life!—my doom is death for ever!
BEAT. . My brother!
DON CÆSAR. Sister! are thy tears for me?
BEAT. . Live for our mother!
DON CÆSAR (*dropping her hand, and stepping back*).
For our mother?
BEATRICE (*hiding her head in his breast*). Live
For her and for thy sister!
Chorus (BOHEMUND). She has won!
Resistless are her prayers. Despairing mother,
Awake to hope again—his choice is made!
Thy son shall live!

[*At this moment an anthem is heard. The folding doors are thrown open, and in the Church is seen the Catafalque erected, and the coffin surrounded with candlesticks.*

DON CÆSAR (*turning to the coffin*). I will not rob thee, brother!
The sacrifice is thine:—Hark! from the tomb,
Mightier than mother's tears, or sister's love,
Thy voice resistless cries:—my arms enfold
A treasure, potent with celestial joys,
To deck this earthly sphere, and make a lot
Worthy the Gods! but shall I live in bliss,
While in the tomb thy sainted innocence
Sleeps unavenged? Thou, Ruler of our days,
All just—all wise—let not the world behold
Thy partial care! I saw her tears!—enough—
They flowed for me! I am content: my brother!
I come!

[*He stabs himself with a dagger, and falls dead at his sister's feet. She throws herself into her mother's arms.*

Chorus, CAJETAN (*after a deep silence*).
In dread amaze I stand, nor know
If I should mourn his fate. One truth revealed
Speaks in my breast;—no good supreme is life;
But of all earthly ills the chief is—Guilt!

END.